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MACEDONIA

(From Antiquity to Our Time)

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INTRODUCTION

Ancient Macedonia as the most celebrated kingdom of the time and Macedonia as a political state created at the end of the twenty-first century, besides its name and an encounter in a geographical part, is only linked through the presence of Albanians who are historically the heirs of ancient Macedonians, part of the Pelasgian-Illyrian world where both the Macedonian and Dardanian kingdoms shared their equal bedding. In this regard, Macedonia appears as an historical name of the Albanians, the same as Epirus, Dardania, and the Illyrian Kingdom.

This stance, however, breaks down the stereotypes so far that the ancient Macedonians and the Macedonians were part of ancient Greece, namely Greek and Greek only. The Pelasgian-Illyrian world affiliation and its kingdoms, breaks down also the issue of Hellenism as exclusively Greek for the undeniable fact that all that appears as an ancient culture and civilization, from myth to philosophy, lies in a pre-civilization bed known as Pelasgian, on which a later one attributed to the Greek civilization was raised. This is widely accepted and proven by both ancient and more recent authors.

“Macedonia from antiquity to our time” does not accidentally deal with breaking these taboos. The claim that Macedonia is part of the Pelasgian-Illyrian world and as such opposes the wrong stereotype of the exclusivity of the affiliation of Greek Hellenism created by the political philosophies of the 19th century erected at that time by well-known European intellectuals and scholars, mostly German and Austrian on the concept of returning to the background of European enlightenment, is much closer to the historical truth than its denial or exclusion by a manipulating and distorting Russian, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian and other political historians for political purposes, who not accidentally leave Macedonia and the Macedonians outside any relation to Albanians also excluding them from history altogether. With this same pretense the rise of the Macedonian issue is viewed, from geographical aspect, from the Middle Ages and on, to a political one, as was the case with Russia's insistence since the Eastern Crisis and onwards, meant to deny the ethnicity Albanian population, divided into four vilayets (Shkodra, Kosova, Mansatir, and Janina), where it was artificially designed upon religious grounds (Orthodox Christianity), to destroy the concept of a common Albanian Vilayet in the Ottoman Empire (a form of an Ottoman Albania that would be restored to a European Albania accordingly). The so-called Krusevo Republic, which emerged after the Ilinden uprising in 1903, and other developments undertaken by Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria in the Albanian vilayets, from a violent turned a geographical issue into an historical context, through converting the orthodox Christianity, initially in ethnicity and later, in accordance with the liturgy language: Greek, Bulgarian and Slavic, into a national affiliation, created political issues in accordance with their hegemonic projects on a key point where its historical and ethnic epicenter lay. As such, at the beginning of the 20th century, Macedonia turned into a political arena that fed regional and world crises (Balkan wars and the world's big war), mostly beneficial to Tito's Yugoslavia. By introducing it within the federation and its elevation to a republic, among the six, it eventually brought it out of the Bulgarian, Greek and Russian interests to turn it into a Yugoslav issues, which also needed the creation of a Macedonian political nation as well as a Macedonian language with a Cyrillic alphabet (that of Vuk Karadžić), although from a philological point of view – it retains the characteristics of a Bulgarian dialect.

The reincarnation of ancient Macedonia into a political state of Macedonian nation beyond historical criteria, as happened in 1991 after the dissolution of Macedonia, from an aspect of European political pragmatism, certainly with the political agreement between Skopje and Athens on the name "North Macedonia" may receive a "conciliatory" epilogue

between geography (on the part of Skopje) and an "acquired historical heritage" (on the part of Athens), though it will not rid it of the abomination that the name "North Macedonia" was part of a Bulgarian project from the year 1906. This, however, does not alter the fact that neither the political nations, such as the Macedonian, based on a recently established Bulgarian-Vlach-Slav amalgam, nor the appropriation of the names of states from that of a world kingdom, such as the ancient Macedonia, in a conjunctive Macedonia, can change historical truths, such as those that the Slav-Macedonian population scattered in its part and that of the Dardanian kingdom have never been part of these ancient kingdoms, the same as it is unable to deny either historical facts or the living realities up to the present, dealing with Albanians - legitimate heirs of ancient Macedonia and its civilization, with traces displayed and preserved in their culture.

In this regard, the book "Macedonia from antiquity to our time", focusing on historical, political and demographic arguments, treats it within the Albanian issue, not excluding other factors in its entirety (Slav Macedonians and others in line with their role and place in it), though without being involved in controversy with the fictional or distorted facts by numerous Serbian, Bulgarian, Russian, Greek, Macedonian, and other historians who, who have been treating historical facts detached from the whole and largely in line with the political realities, even though they are in contradiction to the very historical truth.

Based on historical arguments - Ancient Macedonia is part of the Dardanian-Illyrian ethnicity. Its appearance in the 5th century BC and its rise to a world empire in the 4th century by Alexander the Great retained its character. This is reflected in the times of the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire. This is also reflected at the time of both the Roman and Byzantine Empires. There are no Slavic traces of it because of the well-known reason that they appear in Illyricum sometime after the 7th century, at the time of the Byzantine emperor, Heracles, namely nine centuries later, from where, in the 9th and 10th centuries, after having adopted Christianity, with their tribal formations, and always treated as "barbarians" who are allowed authentic tribal organization (initially zhupanies and later despotates), participate in the social and political life of the Empire. Within this expansion, however, the Bulgarian kingdom and its rise to an important factor in the 9th and 9th centuries played a special role, possibly having influenced the political and social circumstances, but not the ethnic ones, in the Central Illyricum. This fact could not be overwhelmed by the references of geographic Macedonia appearing in the 19th century and its efforts to connect it with the Bulgaria of Boris and Samuil for the creation of Greater Bulgaria as the Peace of St. Stephen of March 1878 decided, and it could not change even by the Belgrade's notorious propaganda for its identification with "medieval Serbia, though with these "arguments" in 1912 during the Balkan Wars, when in the name of "liberation", was conquered by the Serbian army . This fact could not be overwhelmed by the references of geographic Macedonia emerging in the 19th century, and its efforts to connect with the Bulgaria of Boris and Samuil for the creation of a Greater Bulgaria as the Peace of St. Stephen of March 1878 stipulated. It could not be changed even by the well-known Belgrade propaganda identifying it as "medieval Serbia", although using these "arguments" in 1912, during the Balkan Wars, in the name of "liberation", was invaded by the Serbian army .

The historical arguments presented in the above, showing a continuity of the Macedonian and the Dardanian kingdoms shared geographically their common ethnic bedding in the spaces of the present day Macedonian state, can be added the political ones. They relate to the Ottoman Empire and its end, as various interests of the Great Powers will emerge in these parts. That is where its rise originates into a wretched political crisis with a view of turning prey to Russian-Slavic claims in accordance with Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek hegemonic programs. In this case, Albanians, included in four vilayets (Kosovo, Shkodra, Manastir and Janina), will appear on their request for a joint autonomous vilayet

within the Ottoman Empire, some kind of an Ottoman Albania, on its road to turn into a European Albania at the moment the Ottoman Empire would end.

In this regard, the vilayet of Kosovo, as the largest, the kazas of which comprised much of what appeared to be the geographical area of the Macedonia, or Northern Macedonia respectively, ascribed to the Macedonian political state, becomes the center of political Albanianism, emerging from the program of the Albanian League of Prizren of June 1878, with Skopje (Shkup) as the center of the vilayet, from where the entire national movement of 1908-1912 would be directed leading to the declaration of the Albanian state on 28 November 1912. Similarly, the Vilayet of Manastir was the place where Albanian nationalism kept its cultural center and where the Latin alphabet of the Albanian language was also founded.

In addition to the ethnic and political arguments, there are demographic ones, providing legitimacy of the right to life to the historical right, serving as proof of an uninterrupted presence of Albanians in these lands since antiquity. This reality cannot be overlooked, much less violently bent, as it had been done during the 1912 and 1944-45 genocide and with persistent ethnocide, and even by displacement on state agreements with Turkey from 1936 and 1953, with their executive administration infrastructure being seated in Skopje, in the historic capital of Albanians.

PART ONE

ANTIQUITY

CHAPTER ONE

ANCIENT MACEDONIA AS PART OF THE PELASGIAN-ILLYRIAN WORLD

FROM MYTH TO HISTORY

Macedonians and Macedonia, within the Pelasgian-Illyrian world, occupy a special place as both an ethnicity and kingdom. For more, Macedonians and Macedonia occupy a special place in the Hellenic world and generally Hellenism as a civilization, as during the time of Alexander the Great, with his Empire reaching world proportions, it turned into a universal culture. Thus, the Macedonian ethnic group, on the one hand as part of the Pelasgian-Illyrian world, being the cradle of antiquity, and the Macedonian kingdom, bearer of a dynamic social-political concept among the world's most recognized one, on the other hand, open up the issues of historical relations still not clarified between the Pelasgian-Illyrian factor and Hellenic, later Greek one, as well as Hellenism within antiquity. In this regard, the dual role of both the Macedonians and Macedonia, seen out of the current observations - of underestimating of the Pelasgian factor or its exclusion and unilateral appropriation by the Phil-Hellenism of the nineteenth century, disconnecting it from historical continuity – lays the ground for a comprehensive review of antiquity inside those who have followed it both as a civilization and as a political and social reality at the stages of major breaks and curves. These twists were the ones that the ethnic Macedonians crossed within the Pelasgic-Illyrian one, with particular emphasis on an ongoing process of domination within it. This was only natural in those circumstances in relation to the Dardanians and Dardania as its womb prior to its rise to a world empire, which inevitably meant domination over the Hellenic concept of polis-states to the confrontation with the Eastern, Persian and other monarchies.

The internal “differentiation” of the ethnic Macedonian factor and that of the Macedonian kingdom as a prerequisite of their historical objective appreciation, however, goes through their mythical appearance, characteristic of the overall factors of antiquity in the early stages of development when mystical thinking and mythology generally mark the overcoming of philosophy, through which later cultural, social and political processes were developed.

At this point, Macedonians also convey an inevitable tradition of ties to gods, first of all with the pre-Hellenic ones, where Pelasgian Zeus is everywhere, one argument more in favor of their ancestry from Pelasgian antiquity. Thus, Macedon is the son of Zeus and brother of Magnesius, or brother of Eolith,¹ an eponym hero of Macedonia, whereupon it has been

¹ Bell, Re: “Place-names in Classical Mythology: Greece”, California, 1989, p 169.

named. According to another variant, Macedon is the son of Lycoan, who was Pelasg's son,² causing him to be labeled as "Illyrian Lycoan".³ However, with some ancient authors trying to provide a Hellenistic variant, Macedon is extracted as the son of Osiris – an ancient Egyptian god, who with his death and rebirth becomes a savior assuring life in the beyond world. Here comes Diodorus too, who sees Macedon as brother of Anubis, another Egyptian god, with a jackal head who accompanies the dead in the thereafter.⁴

If the mythological view links the Macedonians with the Pelasgian myths, from where, according to ancient authors, Macedon emerges as an eponym hero of Macedonia, from where their ethnicity appears and later its dynasties and kings, its historical space is tangible somewhere in the triangle between the Illyrians in the west, Dardanians in the northwest and Thracians in the east. This is an extension which based on ancient sources changes in accordance with the social and political developments that the Macedonian kingdom will pass since its emergence, sometime in the 7th century BC until its downfall, in the mid-nineteenth century BC, the same as the composition of ethnic factors, albeit from the same root, and their role within it, changes. This issue of particular interest is presented in an ethnic (multi-tribal) and also social and political relation with Paeonians, Bryges (Phrygians), and Dardanians, Illyrians, Epirotes and others from the Pelasgian-Illyrian world, where their affiliation and relationships with the Hellenes before they rise to the size of a world empire should be sought.

Even here, the ancient authors have almost always the main say and are inevitable despite the contradictions and other ambiguities that follow their records, which often served and continue to serve for various assumptions coming frequently unnatural because of the approach in their interpretation. Their common ground, however, is that the space of Macedonia before it emerges as a dynasty and later a kingdom (from the 7th to the 2nd century BC) and relating mainly to the penetration of the Arges dynasty,⁵ was inhabited by numerous tribes, including the Pierians (at the foot of Olympus), the Boeotians, Eordians (near Physok in Mygdonia), Edonians (also in Mygdonia), the Almonites (in Almonia), and others, and also mentioned the inseparable Paeonians from the Dardanians and Dardania, "whose lands Axios to Pella and the Sea (Aegean) had been taken".⁶ According to ancient sources, the space where the dynasty and the kingdom of Macedonia will rise, consisted of several "scattered" provinces, among which Mygdonia, Pelagonia and Pionia were the largest, formerly called *Emathia*. For Paeonia, as an important ethnicity among the Dardanians and Macedonians, Strabo says that the Illyrians (Boeotians of Crete origin) and the Thracian tribes (Piraeus, Paeonians, Edonians, and Bisaltes) resided, and that the proper name of Macedonia is related this name.⁷

Unlike Strabo, Herodotus, in the sense of an ethnic conceivment of an established Macedonian state and its antiquity dominated by the Macedonians, mentions the Temenid brothers: Perdica, Guan, and Aerop, who coming from the Bermion Mountains flooded into other parts subduing local tribes, with some of them abandoning the area and submitting to numerous movements.⁸

MACEDONIANS, PAEONIANS, BRYGES (PHRYGIANS)

² See: Strabon, VII, 329, fr. 1; Hesiod, fr 29; Etienne de Byzance, s.v., Μακεδονία; Diodore de Sicile; Elien, Nat. Des An, X, 48.

³ Grimal, P: "Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine", Paris, 1951, p. 117.

⁴ Idem, p. 273.

⁵ Thucydides: "Historiae", ed. H. S. Jones – J. E. Powell, Oxonii, 1942, II, 99.

⁶ Idem.

⁷ Strabo (Strabonis) : "Geographica graeca cum versione reficta curantibus" - C. Müllers et F. Dübner. Parisiis edit. Ambrosio Firmin Didot 1853, VII, frg. 11.

⁸ Herodotus: "Historiarum", VIII-IX, ed. H. R. Dietsch – H. Kalberger, Teurbner, 1926, p. 138.

Despite Strabo's record about Macedonia, emerging from the penetration of the Temenid brothers - founders of the Macedonian dynasty, although speaking of the subjugation of several tribes he calls "Illyrian, Epirotan and Thracian" and pointing out that "some of them moved to other places",⁹ however, the further ethnicity of Macedonia remains unclear, especially the important tribes of Paeonians and Phrygians (Bryges), who continue to be present in the new circumstances, where their inevitable definition with the Dardanians and Dardania is almost unchanged in all the developments that, a bit later, from a state aspect, will return to a relation between Macedonians and Dardanians.

However, the emergence of Paeonians as the most powerful ethnic group in the circumstances of the rise of the Macedonian kingdom, who continue to be present in the whirlwind of historical events, rightfully, in addition to their broad dispersion,¹⁰ draws the dilemma of their role in these developments for the fact that according to ancient authors, they turn into an arena of clashes between northern Dardanians and southern Macedonians,¹¹

The Bryges, though not mentioned by Strabo and Tucidides, are mentioned by Herodotus as a "highly warlike" factor as witnessed at the beginning of the 5th century BC during the Mardon campaign in the fight against the Persian army.¹² What Herodotus says of Bryge's military power, however, has nothing to do with the period of their kingdom (13th-12th century BC), but beyond it, in the part of Macedonia, during the time when the Macedonian kingdom was strengthening its position in relation to the Dardanians, Paeonians, Epirotes and others around.

This and similar "fragments" rightly raise the issue of the role these two ethnicities play in the further social and political differentiation between the Illyrians and Thracians, namely the Dardanian factor, always seen in the same space and relationship in the 7th – 5th century BC when the Macedonian dynasty and kingdom appeared, paving the way for a new historical development among the most dynamic of the time, whereby it rose to a world empire.

According to this point, clearly the relations between Macedonians and Paeonians and Bryges (Phrygians) speak of the race for power (even as mutual war) between the constituent factors of the same kind (Pelasgians-Illyrians) a phenomenon inherent to domination and supremacy, though it has produced continuous wars, among which that of Troy justly seen as "a war among Pelasgian tribes".¹³

The war between the Pelasgian tribes in Troy and elsewhere has been described by other authors as well. If the participants of this hypothetical war were to be "classified" based on the records by ancient authors, in a way, it also becomes clear in the "Iliad and Odyssey",¹⁴ the same as in the "Aeneid".¹⁵

In this respect, however, bringing into light, even approximately to Paeonians and Bryges (Phrygians), for as much as records by ancient authors allow and what can be drawn from reconstructed, somewhat linguistic, archaeological and anthropological evidence, in some way helps the illumination of the Illyrian-Thracian world as a legacy of the one lying in Illyricum and Asia Minor, as well as the social and political circumstances that factorized the Macedonian state in relation to the Dardanians, the Illyrians on the one hand and the Hellenes

⁹ Idem, p. 45.

¹⁰ According to Appini, Paeonians "are a large tribe near Istris (present-day Slovenia) stretching alongside Japodes reaching up to Dardanians. (See "*Illyrike*", 8.)

¹¹ Polybios (*Historiai* - 23, 10, 4.) and Strabo ("*Geographica graeca versione reficta curantibus*", 7, p. 38), think that the Paeonians mastered the plain coast of Macedonia, and that Paeonia stretched up to Pelagonia and Pieria.

¹² Herodotus: "*Historiarum*", VIII-IX, ed. H. R. Dietsch – H. Kalberger, Teurbner, 1926, p. 45.

¹³ See: Budimir Milan: "*O etničkim odnosu dardanaca prema ilirima*", Beograd, 1952.

¹⁴ Homer: "*Iliada dhe Odiseja*", Tirana, 1986.

¹⁵ Virgilius Maro: "*Eneis*", Heidelberg, 2006.

on the other, where the Paeonians in many aspects emerge as a Dardanian tribe,¹⁶ while the Bryges - a dual power: initially as a dynasty in a part of Macedonia and southeastern Illyria - as Bryges, and later, after the Trojan war, in Asia Minor's Bithynia – as Phrygians, where they founded their own state, known as one of the powerful kingdoms of antiquity bringing to an end the renowned Hittite kingdom,¹⁷ although it too will evidently be part of the orbit of the Pelasgian-Illyrian world, though it has long been associated with the Sumerian population.

Regardless of the developments in which the Macedonian kingdom, especially that of Alexander the Great, will get on the rails of a world empire, based on records by ancient authors, it turns out that the ethnic view of Macedonia between the twelfth and eighth centuries BC, i.e. the one preceding the emergence of the Macedonian dynasty and later kingdom, whose power will culminate in the 4th century BC, was dominated by Bryges in the Western part,¹⁸ Paeonians in the Center¹⁹ and Edonians (Mygdonians) in the eastern Aegean part.²⁰

However, the prevailing view of these ethnic groups (Paeonians and Bryges), in a common space with the exception of Mygdonians, associated with the Bryges,²¹ comes out largely unclear based on the reports on their internal social and political reports reflected on the one hand by the rise of Bryges to a powerful kingdom in the 13th century BC till their fall to the Sumerians in the 8th century, often regarded as not different from them, as they represent “an early form of Pelasgic stratification”,²² scattered in various parts of the Euro-Asian space by conditioned circumstances (migrations, wars and other unclear movements) and, on the other hand, it comes out blurred by the actual power of these ethnicities, knowing that Paeonians still remain an important factor amidst the Dardanian claims in the central part of Illyricum with the Macedonians. For more, in this regard, always relying on the data by ancient authors, it is obvious that the Paeonians for a period, in the year 360 BC, also devastated the kingdom of Macedonia,²³ though it was Philip II, who after taking power, signed peace with the Paeonians, but after the death of their king Agassius in 359, he shortly conquered them,²⁴ though even after this Paeonians continued to oppose Philip in an alliance with the Illyrians.²⁵

Despite the Paeonians, whose presence is constantly seen in the part dividing the Dardanians from Macedonians (in the north of Macedonia), the Bryges, another powerful

¹⁶ See: Hahn, J von G: “*Albanesische Studien*” m I, Jena 1854.

¹⁷ See: Frashëri, Krišto: “*Etnogjeneza e shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013, pp. 98-104.

¹⁸ Папазоглу, Фанула: “*Етничка структура античке Македоније у светлости новијих ономастичких истраживања*”, Balcanica, VIII, Belgrade, 1977, p. 67.

¹⁹ According to Polybius and Strabo, the Paeonians owned the Macedonian plain coast. They add that Paeonia once stretched as far as Pelagonia and Pieri. This condition refers to the time before the Trojan War, because in the Trojan Catalog the river Aks (ios) was the western border of the areas where the Paeonians lived. (Spahiu, Arsim: “*Maqedonia e vjetër dhe arkeologji e tyre*” (“Ancient Macedonia and their archeology”), Tiranë, 2013, p. 34).

²⁰ Папазоглу, Фанула: “*Етничка структура античке Македоније у светлости новијих ономастичких истраживања*”, Balcanica, VIII, Belgrade, 1977, p. 67.

²¹ In most ancient sources, the Mygdonians are associated with the Phrygians. In the Iliad, Mygdon was called the leader of the Phrygians. In the Iliad (III, 186), Mygdon is mentioned as the opposing hero of the Mygdon tribe. His brother, Edonos, was the eponym of the Edonians, while the son Grastos, the eponym of the neighbors, the Crestos, or Grestons. According to his daughters, the city of Parthenopolis was also named, while according to Mygdon's granddaughter, Tirse, is named the city of Tirsais.

²² About the Pelasgian stratification as a special branch of Indo-European peoples that should be considered not only in Illyricum and Anatolia, but also in the Apennine Peninsula, draws the attention of the Yugoslav philologist Milan Budimir in his study “*Pelasto-Slavica*”, 1951. The well-known philologist, who defends the Pelasgian origin of the Dardano-Illyrians and Thracians, who according to him gives signs from the early Neolithic, estimates that the connections of the Paeonians and the Brygians with those of the southern Illyrians and Liburnians could be clarified if one considers the evolution from that common stratum, without excluding the possibilities of tribal migrations to remote areas. Budimir says that the tradition about the Pelagons and the Brygians in the northwestern part of the Adriatic enters into the circle of these issues, which should not be seen as erroneous.

²³ See Diodorus: *Bibliotheca historia, recognovit*, Fr. Vogel, works, XVI, 3, 4, 1888.

²⁴ Idem.

²⁵ Diodor, XVI,22,1 dhe Hammond,N.G.L: “*A History of Macedonia*”, 1981.

ethnicity of the age, lying and “fragmented” in the Euro-Asian space, are identified in the basin of the Erigon River (Εριγών), whence they left after being expelled from the Macedonians,²⁶ with some of them settling in southern Illyria, east of the Axios River (today’s Vardar) and in the basin of Korça, where the settlement of Maliqi also lies,²⁷ and emerging later as Phrygians in Asia Minor within a powerful kingdom.

Of course, “this confusion” between these two ethnicities and the emergence of Bryges as Phrygians in Asia Minor in a dominating role, also seen in the part of Macedonia, in an almost constant proximity with Dardania and southern Illyricum, is followed with an uncertainty about the true power of one or the other ethnicity in mutual relations before, during and after the emergence of Macedonians as a power in that space, whereby, unlike the Bryges, considered as a Thracian tribe,²⁸ Paeonians are taken for a Dardanian tribe,²⁹ sometimes even as Thracian,³⁰ though there are claims stating that “Paeonians are a Phrygian column”,³¹ who will later “be assimilated by the Macedonians”?³²

However, in this context, there is another significant factor giving the Paeonian-Phrygian “quarrel” a clarification in line with the role of the Dardanian factor from the 16th century onwards, emerging as their common womb, in the hypothetical circumstances of a powerful Dardanian kingdom of the time, lying in the Euro-Asian space, and that its downfall in the 13th-12th centuries after a clash for dominance between Pelasgic tribes (designed as a hypothetical war of Troy, though two or three centuries later), was transferred to the Phrygian kingdom. That the Dardanians represented a great power of time is clear from the Greek mythology and some ancient sources possibly based on them.

This had to do with the Dardanians settling in Samothrace (Scamandra), the island on the north of the Aegean Sea, the first gateway to Phrygia (Asia Minor), where they founded Ilion (later Troy). This movement deriving from Greek mythology and several antiquity authors, amongst many others from the second millennium on the part of Danubian civilization towards the East (Central Europe, West and East Illyricum), sees the Dardanians as important historical actors from the 16th century BC in such an important space as Samothrace on the north of the Aegean Sea, which Homer portrays as an island from where the battlefield in Troy could be seen.³³ About the island, W. Hazlitt says that the Dardanians were those inhabiting it in about 1506 BC and continuing with Asia Minor:

"Dardanian, a Pelasgian tribe from Moesia or Paeonia, under the leadership of their leader Dardanus, son of Jupiter and Electra, first colonized Samothrace and then Dardania in Asia Minor."³⁴ That Samothrace in ancient times is called Dardania, Melita, etc., is also confirmed by A. Charles³⁵ and Laurent.³⁶ This is quite possible, though a certain "ambiguity"

²⁶ Georgief, V: “*La toponymie ancienne de la peninsule Balkanique et la These mediterraneene.*” Sofia, 1961.

²⁷ Idem.

²⁸ Herodotus speaks of the Bryges (Phrygians) in three places. In book VI, page 45, he calls them “Thracian trimes”. But, in the description of the peoples who took part in the army of Xerxes (books VII, pages 73 and 74), he distinguishes the Phrygians from the Thracians, who according to the Macedonian legends, when they were in Europe and in the neighborhood of the Macedonians, were called the Bridges, while “when they crossed into Asia they took the name Bithynia”. Also, Herodotus, in book VIII, page 185, introducing those who took part in the army of Xerxes from Europe, mentions the Thracians, Paeonians and Brygians, Piraeus, Macedonians and others. Even Strabo, in book VII, page 25, mentions the “Thracian tribe Bryges”, who previously lived near the Bermion Mountains, some of them moved to Asia, where it took the name Phrygia. It also says that the Greeks took the Phrygians as Thracians, who migrated to Asia Minor. The Thracians were also considered Mydonites and Bithynians.

²⁹ Hahn, Georg von: “*Albanensische Studie*”, Jena, 1865.

³⁰ Strabo, VII, 2, 3, 25.

³¹ This position is supported by V. Georgiev, joining the well-known Illyrian linguists: Ed. Meyer, H. Krahe and others. (See: Georgief, VI: “*La toponymie ancienne de la peninsule Balkanique et la These mediterraneene*”, Sofia 1961).

³² Idem.

³³ See Homer “*Iliada*”, Tiranë 1979. Song I, p. 63.

³⁴ See: Hazlitt, William; “*The Classical gazetteer: A Dictionary of Ancient Geograpy, Sacred and Profane*”, London: Whittaker and Co., 1851, p. 132.

³⁵ See Athon, Charles: “*A System of Ancient and Mediaval Geography, For the Use Schools and Colleges*”, New York: Harper&Brothers, 1850, p. 434, cited according to Laçej, Naim: “*Tanagra*”, Lezhë, 2012, p. 187.

that should have not been so results from an often repeated source of Troy, where the Dardanians settled during the rule of Teucer, hence with the population called after the King's name as Teukrán, but also Phrygia Minor.³⁷ After the Dardanus' marriage to Batia, King Teucer's daughter, after replacing his father-in-law on the throne, the population would be called Dardanian. Though the ancient authors never say it, it is very close to mind that the change of the name of the people from Teucrians to Dardanians has nothing to do with Dardanus' marriage to King Teucer's daughter as it was about the Pelasgian-Dardanian ethnicity and its wide extension to that part, which has often been subject to geographical names, and at times to the names of kings, the same as was the case with the Illyrians in Illyria, Thracians in Thrace, the Phrygians (Bryges) in Phrygia, Macedonians in Macedonia, etc.

The emergence of the Dardanian factor in this part and the civilization flourishing during this time (i.e. the sixteenth century BC) resulting in the erection of several cities by the same name (*Dardanum* on the shore of the Marmara Sea and *Dardania* a little further away with its seat),³⁸ alongside the occurrence of ethnic denominations of the same ethno-linguistic trunk with different denominations on geographical bases and the royal dynasties to which they submitted, even hypothetically, raises the issue of the likelihood of a wide stretching of the Dardanian kingdom as very powerful one on both sides: both European and Asian parts. Its power is best reflected in Phrygia, with the historical evidence of Dardanus' rule over Phrygia for 65 and qualified as king of Phrygia,³⁹ which included Troy as well, a fact that would lead some ancient authors (Herodotus, Strabo, and Plini) to connect the name of Phrygia, as they claim, "with the people of Macedonia, called *Bryges*", which according to them "after moving to Asia Minor, were called *Phrygian*".⁴⁰

Herodotus, will even view the Armenians as a Phrygian colony in that divided part of the East up to the Caucasus and Mesopotamia, and he even mentions the "Dardanian lands at the river Gyndes, a stream flowing into the Tigris River",⁴¹ as many others will view them. This leads to an understanding that the Bryges, or the Phrygians and Paeonies, in a constant proximity to the Macedonians, were no other than Dardanian tribes among many such populations coming from the Pelasgian world and its antiquity, and that this expansion, which does not exclude even the Hittites and their empire even when it is looked at in a movement to somehow confirm the Arian theory according to which the Hellenes who in the 11th century reached the East, seems quite unstable in the face of historical facts that the supposed Dardanian tribes (Bryges or Phrygian, and Paeonies) represented no other than an ethno-linguistic community, where Dardanians emerged as the main factor of these social, cultural and political realities.

Despite the scattered data about the reciprocal ethnic relations between Paeonies and Bryges and their "dependence" on the Dardanian factor in their possible composition (as tribes), which, according to Budimir, is explained by a common paleo-European strata, which he calls Pelasgian, however, the historical framework of the Phrygian kingdom (in Asia Minor) is related to their kingdom between 1140-800 BC, with the capital Edessa, that is, in the twelfth century, when it is thought that the demise of the Dardanian kingdom began

³⁶ See: Laurent, Peter Edmund: "An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Geography. With Copious Indexes", Oxford, For Henry Slatter: And Whitaker, Treacher, and Arnot, 1830, p. 100.

³⁷ See Robinson, John: "Ancient History; Exhibiting a Summary Views of Progress, Revolutions, Decline and Fall of the States and Nations of Antiquity", London, 1831, p. 162.

³⁸ See: Boog, G: "The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian", London, 1814, p. 285.

³⁹ See: Laurent, Peter Edmund: "An Introduction to the Study of Ancient Geography: With Copious Index to the Whole", London 1747, p. 480, cited according to Lačej, Naim. "Tanagra", Lezhë, 2012, p. 197.

⁴⁰ Taylor, Isaac: "Herodotus, Translated From the Greek, For the Use of General Readers; With Short Explanatory Notes", London 1829, Book VII, p. 75.

⁴¹ Idem.

following wars within their own kind that Homer will carry to the “Iliad” a few centuries later.

According to Hammond they poured down from the north sometime around 1200 BC, whereby the northwestern part of Macedonia was divided into three directions:⁴² to the West along the Adriatic shore reaching Epidamnus in around 1170,⁴³ in the South to the Molosses and Kaonies,⁴⁴ in the East, in the direction of Paeonia, from where they supposedly moved to Asia Minor,⁴⁵ with a part of them continuing to settle in Paeonia.⁴⁶

Despite the scarce information about the Phrygian kingdom, however, it can be said that its most prominent kings were Grotius and his son Midas (in the 8th century BC). Gordius’ capital was at the famous Gordion, a city on the banks of the Sangarios River. The ancient authors claim that the Phrygian kingdom was powerful in all of Anatolia, which several centuries later would be destroyed by Sumerian invaders. These blurred data explain that later on Phrygia was included in the Lydian kingdom, while the name Phrygia continued to be used by the Greeks ending up by being replaced by the name of Galatia, by the name of the Galactian invaders of the 3rd century BC. It is also said that the remaining Bryges (Phrygians) in Thrace would be dispersing somewhat throughout Illyricum,⁴⁷ which also arouses the strange unknown about the power of the Bryges (Phrygians) in Euro-Asian areas, especially in Illyricum and Macedonia, where traces confirm their presence, beyond any particular social, political and temporal reference with which their true power was rebuilt.

Hammond’s focus on the Phrygian kingdom and their arrival from the north-western part finds support in the attitude of M. Aref, with the only difference that the latter feels that the Bryges (Phrygians) are an old people of the Pelasgic family, detached from the second great movement of the second millennium, flooding over (accompanied by their blood brothers, Thracians and Illyrians) from the middle Danube coast to Illyricum and then to Asia Minor.⁴⁸ There Homer sees them at Ascania, in the field of the Trojans,⁴⁹ with sources announcing that around the 13th century, the name of (Bryges) Phrygians replaced that of Trojans. The fact that their king “Divine Migdone”, mentioned by Homer in the Trojan War, claims that they were part of the Pelasgian family and of other peoples who participated in the hypothetical war,⁵⁰ which most likely was waged among Pelasgian peoples four centuries before. Even the rewritten version of the “Iliad” at the time of Pisistratus (6th century BC), although trying to hide these realities, however, even with the introduction of the Greeks on the historical scene based on the Hellenistic concept, could not alter the content of this reality.

Indeed, the end of Bryges (Phrygians) raises the question of what language they spoke considering that some sources say that the correct version of the “Iliad”, that is, before the one edited by the editorial office of the Pisistratus (6th century BC) it could be Phrygian, a Dardanian vernacular (a dialect of the Pelasgian)?⁵¹

⁴² See: Hammond, N.G.L: “*A History of Macedonia*”, 1981, pp. 412-414.

⁴³ According to Appiani, the Brygians, who in the time of Heracles came from Phrygia, conquered Durrës and after their departure the city fell into the hands of the Illyrian Taulants, and later into the hands of the Illyrian Liburnians. (Appiani: *Bella Civilla*, II, 39).

⁴⁴ According to Scymn, “This land has a lake, which the Brygians call Lynhid (Lake Ohrid) ... According to these, here live the barbarian Brygians” (“*Perihegesis*”, 23, pp. 433,436).

⁴⁵ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e shqiptarëve*”, Tirana, 2013, p. 100.

⁴⁶ See Herodotus: “Astrigora, in order to insult King Dar, sent to Phrygia a man to the Paeonians, whom Megabazus had brought from Strymon as a captive and were then living in a village of Phrygia” (“*Historie*”, V, p. 98).

⁴⁷ Aref, Mathieu: “*Mikenët=Pellazgët*”, Tirana, p. 196.

⁴⁸ Aref, Mathieu: “*Mikenët=Pellazgët*”, Tirana, p. 196.

⁴⁹ See: Homer: “*Iliada*”, II, 862.

⁵⁰ Idem, III,186.

⁵¹ In more detail see Laçe, Naim: “Tanagra”, Lezhë, 2012, pp. 163-196; Krispi, Giuseppe: “*Albanian the mother of languages*”, Palermo 1831. The Arbëresh philologist says that the Dardanians, Phrygians, and Pelasgians had the same language, traces of which can be seen today in the Albanian language and that traces of some Phrygian customs, along with those of the language, may have been preserved since the time of the Macedonian sovereigns, because the ancient nation preserves both the language and the customs.” (See pp. 20-21.)

These and similar assumptions, still waiting for answers opening up an opportunity to draw closer to other unknowns, where an important place is also the one of clarifying their traces in Illyricum, and other parts of the Dardanian and Thracian areas, where they, along with Paeonians and Pyrrhus, had moved and seem more and more accessible.

If their traces in Illyricum, some parts of the Dardanian and Thracian areas, relate to Pelasgian antiquity and as such can be explained by the extent of the Dardanians and Dardania in a wide Euro-Asian space where they appear from the 15th century BC as a bridge between the two worlds, in almost the entire social and political developments, their language already known to belong to the Indo-European family and the Hittite, make this assumption more reliable. Although only one inscription has been found in this language in our time so far, providing proof that it had four conjunction cases (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative), that it had three genres (masculine, feminine, neutral) and there were two grammatical categories of the number (singular and plural), some linguists have concluded that the Phrygian had some meeting points with the Greek, assumingly deriving sharing long neighborhood with the Greeks when the Bryges (Phrygians) resided in the Illyrian Peninsula, in the space between the Dardanians and Paeonians, in permanent neighborhood with the Macedonians.⁵²

Referring to this issue, philologist Milan Budimir, when it comes to the distinction of the Phrygian *velari* and *labiovalri*, as a characteristic of an old linguistic stratification, finds it to be the same as that of the Albanian from which he concludes of numerous affinities between these languages in the phonetic system. On this occasion, he takes as an example the word βονοκ (ov).⁵³

As the philosopher Budimir warns, the inscription discovered in Asia Minor, has also pointed out certain Phrygian meeting points with the Albanian, which are thought to have derived through the Illyrian as they were living in a common space.⁵⁴

Such are the following: *anar* in French, “*burrë*” in Albanian, “*njeri*”; *belte*, in Albanian “*baltë*” or “*pellg*”; *germe* – in French “*nxehtësi*”, in Albanian “*zjarrmi*”; *kakon*, in Albanian “*keq*”; *mater* in French “*nënë*”, in Albanian “*motër*”.⁵⁵

Here comes the Phrygian word “*becos*”, in Albanian “*bukë*”, which has a separate story that Herodotus brings in connection with a trial of Psamitic king to see who was the oldest people in the world, as he did not believe the widespread tradition then that Egyptians called themselves the oldest people of the world.⁵⁶

As a rule, linguists are divided in linking this old word “*becos*” (βεχος) in Phrygian with “*bukë*” in Albanian. Among those who accept this bond, among others, are J. R. von Xylander, D. Kamarda, F. Ribezzo, K. Ostir, N. Jokl, C. Tagliavini, and others.

But other scholars, such as F. Miklosich, G. Mayer, W. Meyer-Lübcke, S. Puscarius, G. Weigand, etc., find it difficult to link the Albanian word “*bukë*” with the Phrygian word “*bekos*”, as the Illyrians, from whom Albanians must have borrowed this word, were not, in their opinion, in contact with the Bryges (Phrygians) residing in Asia Minor.⁵⁷

⁵² Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e Shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 99.

⁵³ See Budimir, Milan “*Grci i Pelasti*”, Beograd, 1950, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e Shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 100.

⁵⁵ Idem.

⁵⁶ According to Herodotus, King Psamm, to prove which is the oldest language in the world, took two newborn babies and gave them to a shepherd to raise with his cattle. He ordered the shepherd to lock the two babies in a hut, to stop anyone from talking to them, and to send a goat to feed them with its milk. In this way the king wanted to know what first words the babies would utter when they grew up. “Two years later,” writes Herodotus, “when the shepherd opened the door of the hut, he heard the two babies crawling: ‘*Becos!*’ ‘*Bekos!*’ The first time the shepherd did not pay attention to the word, but after hearing them several times, he called the king. When King Psamitichus asked, he learned that the Phrygians called *bread* - *bekos* – (alb. *bukë*). In this way, he concluded that the Frygians were the oldest people in the world.” (See: Herodoti: “*Historitë*”, Book LII, I.)

⁵⁷ See: Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e Shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 99.

Among those finding it difficult to link the Albanian word “*bukë*” with the Phrygian “*bekos*” falls also E. Çabej, who says that the word “*bukë*” does not come from the Phrygian “*bekos*” but rather from the Latin “*bucca*” (mouth, swollen face), which according to him, in the Latin vernacular *bucca*, has the meaning of a *bite*.⁵⁸

Historian K. Frashëri does not accept Çabej’s and other linguists’ assumption denying the etymological connection of the two similar words among them, the Albanian *bukë* from *bekos* in Phrygian, based solely on the argument of the geographical distance between Illyricum Illyrians and Bryges) Anatolian, as according to him, it should be revised.⁵⁹

K. Frashëri points out that despite the further destiny of Bryges in Illyricum and its migration to a Euro-Asian space, this ancient population resided in the southeastern part of Illyria bordering with the Macedonians in a region, which also included the Neolithic-Aeneolithic settlement of Maliq, in the district of Korça. Frashëri says that it can be assumed that the proto-Indo-European inhabitants who created the Aeneolithic of the second layer of Maliq culture (Maliq II) were the Indo-European Bryges (Phrygians), concluding that “there is no wonder that the Albanian language has inherited through Illyrian the word “*bukë*” from “*bekos*”, from the Phrygians living in the Illyrian areas”.⁶⁰

The disagreement of historian K. Frashëri with the so-called “geographical distance between the Illyrians of Illyricum and Bryges (Phrygians)” is in principle fair. On the grounds that “the Albanian language inherited the word “*bukë*” from “*bekos*” from the Bryges (Phrygians) living in Illyrian territories”, Frashëri questions the well-known positions of European historiography of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries about the treatment of Pelasgians as indigenous, therefore extinct, and Pelasgian – a language melted in many languages. However, as the concepts of the Indo-European and Arianism are based on the foundations of a schematic Hellenism, then, it is expected that the arguments related to the Albanian language, according to the stereotypes of the clichés of Indo-Europeanism and Arianism, will be thrown into a so-called “Pre-Hellene” shed sealed and veiled unilaterally!

These unscientific views that have touched and damaged the Pelasgian case as the cradle of ancient civilization and with that of Illyrian, Dardanian, Thracian, Macedonian, and others of this continuity, with the Albanian playing a special role, not by accident have overlooked or marginalized the Bryges (Phrygians) and other peoples from the great Pelasgian family lying in the Mediterranean, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. The social and political realities that these peoples will pass through, whether disconnected, as coming from the eye of ancient authors and their supporters, unequivocally build the image of a comprehensive historical framework on which, at least from the middle of the second millennium to its end, those occasionally called “proto-Illyrian archaic”, namely the Pelasgian peoples in Asia Minor (Dardanians, Trojans, Mosques, Phrygians or Bryges, Etruscans and others) now believed to have invaded the north continuing by the flow of the Danube their expansion across Central Europe to the Apennine and Iberian Peninsula. With their initial social and political organization, the origins of what we know as the *Dardanian-Thracian-Macedonian-Illyrian* kingdom appear to lie both in the east and west. Among them and an important one, in addition to that of Troy, is that of the Phrygians or Bryges, which explains the essence of the pre-Hellenic period with Aegean-Cretan civilizations as part of the Pelasgian, so that from the 19th century BC until the 6th century BC, will open the way for the archaic period (*stricto sensu*), in which Greece appears and thus from the fourth century BC and on we know about the Hellenistic period, though in the version of the nineteenth century European Phil-Hellenism, as the political developments of the time needed.

⁵⁸ See: E.Çabej: “*Studime etimologjike në fushë të shqipërisë*” (“*Etymological studies in the field of Albanian*”), an edition of the Academy of Sciences of Albania, Vol. II. 1976, p. 357.

⁵⁹ See Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e Shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 100.

⁶⁰ Idem, p. 102.

Although the ancient authors, to the extent they can be trusted, have left enough evidence that the world beyond them, hence the term “barbaric”, has been profound, extensive and also well organized from top-down, from which virtually all the values in their civilization came, the conjurers of "modern Hellenism", however, did not find them sufficient to rebuild the look of antiquity as far as this was possible by such a distance, but did their utmost to try to split and divide it as much as possible from its entirety. This disconnection done by today's historiography, rather than dealing with the trunk and the roots, deals with the branches and leaves, a view which as in the case of the interpretation of the Phrygian (Bryges) word "*bekos*", Albanian "*bukë*", overturns the issues so that they are not viewed from the head but rather from the tail. Head implies that the starting point of the explanation of this and other words from a far antiquity being a monogenesis of languages and the common ethnicity under a Pelasgian empire or Dardanian kingdom, of which other kingdoms from the Phrygian, Lydian, Macedonian, and Illyrian kingdoms were part, and not the other way around. While by the tail means dealing with something disconnected and as part of others, that is, out of the common and the roots, whereby the deduction turns the matter into a problem, rather than resolving it in accordance with its essence.

Of the same nature are also the dilemmas about the Hittites as an ancient people, emerging in the historical arena from the beginnings of the second millennium in the middle part of Asia Minor. Supposedly, they belonged to the Indo-European peoples.⁶¹

However, from a multitude of tiles discovered in Boghaz Keiu or Boghazky, it turns out that the Hittites, like Sumerians, spoke an Indo-European language, among the oldest, that T. Bryce, receiving information from numerous linguists that nothing of it was explained by the old Greek, will associate the Hittites with that of the Illyrians,⁶² precisely in accordance with ethnic and later social and political ties between Dardanians, Trojans, and Phrygians (Bryges) to the Hittites, which is best dedicated to fossils of a common language.

Despite this information, certain Phil-Hellenes have tried by all means to associate the name of King *Akagamuns* or *Akhaiava* = *Akhava*, equating the root of "*AKH*" with the Indo-European "*AQU*" (water, river) with the word *Akhen* (Akhaioi) in Greek. This however was not possible as switching from *AQU* to *AKH* cannot be done in Greek.⁶³

The lack of explanation for the word *Achaeus* (*Akhaioi*) with the Greek and the acceptance of the Hittite variant as "inconceivable", however, raises the issue of *Achaeus* as an ancient people whose name is also related to ancient Macedonia, for which Homer reports that they were leaders of those who started the war against the Trojans, where alongside the Danians, descendants of the Egyptian Danaos and Argionos, Argos residents, there was also Achaea or of the city of Argos. Authors of antiquity present the Achaeans as a “newly arriving” population settling in the Pelasgian lands among the “barbarians”, meaning the Pelasgians, though apparently the Hittite tablets maintain another explanation for the

⁶¹ It is thought that from the beginning of the second millennium, the Hittites and Luvites conquered Central Asia Minor populated mostly by proto-Hittites, Asian peoples. There they founded the ancient Hittite dynasty. Hatusa moves his capital to Hatusa from where he participates in military campaigns against Syria and Babylon. In the 16th century BC the Hittite kingdom ruled by Mitanni stands out, associated with the ancient Hurrian people. Between the years 1380-1190 BC we have the New Hittite Empire. Under the reign of Sapoliuluma the Hittites became a great power and conquered a large part of Asia Minor. In 1294, in the famous battle of Kadesh, in which the Dardanians also took part, the Hittites suffered losses from the Egyptians, which started the destruction of their Empire. (See Aref, Mathieu: "*Mikenët=Pellazgët*", Tiranë, p.313).

⁶² Trevor Bryce published a complete study on the Hittites, where among other things he says that “referring to the names of the Hittite kings, it is seen that they have the suffix *-ili*, a way which identified them with the star, the sun, the mightiest God in antiquity. Apart from the Illyrians and the Hittites, there is no other people in Asia or Europe to use the suffix *-ili* after the name of a king. Among the Semitic languages, the suffix *-ili* simply denotes God. The Hittites and Illyrians shared the same culture and civilization and the same language. In the above study, an analysis is made based on linguistic elements and archaeological findings, engraved on stones the figure of the most powerful and mightiest symbol of antiquity, there are descendants who still speak its language, and these descendants are Albanians. Albanians, the descendants of the Illyrians, are the “rightful owners” as a symbol kept by a people who founded the greatest civilizations of antiquity. For more see: "*The Kingdom of the Hittites*", Oxford, 1998.

⁶³ See: Aref, Mathieu: "*Mikenët=Pellazgët*", Tiranë, 2008, p. 360.

Achaean as members of a powerful Hittite confederation of 24 states, of which a state was called *Taroisa, Troisa (Troai = Troy?)*.⁶⁴ Presumably, this “great sea people”, located on the borders of the future Lycia et Pamphylia, after parting with the Hittite empire, defeated another king of *Akhiyava*, a contemporary of the Hittite King, *Antaravas*.⁶⁵

Obviously, the linguistic data from these inscriptions, as far as they have been deciphered, pushed some linguists to contemplate on the Hittite “*Agakamunas*” and “*Agamemnon*”, King of Micea, and between “*Antavaras*” and “*Andreas*” the first king of Orkomenos in Beotia,⁶⁶ a country known to be associated with the first historical recognition of Pelasgians and their descendants, Dardanians, Illyrians, Macedonians and others.

However, the exclusion of the Hittite connections with the old Greek, and the search for a possibility of it being found in the Illyrian-Dardanian family and thus in the Albanian language (on condition it is handled from the root rather than the branches as it usually happens), has to do with the well-known attitude of those linguists who claim that it is in Illyricum and Asia Minor that the non-Greek Indo-Europeans should be sought (Dardanians, Paeonians, Bryges, Macedonians and others from the trunk of the Illyrian-Thracian ethnicity) as much older stratification from the one known after the Greek invasions in these spaces.⁶⁷

MACEDONIANS AND DARDANIANS

The relations between the Macedonians and Dardanians are of an ethnic nature, sharing common Pelasgian roots, as sharing also the same pattern of kingdoms, characteristic of the social and political organization within the framework of the overall Illyrian configuration. These reports, however, both in the ethnic and social-political context, have their own characteristics, especially in circumstances when one or the other ethnicity includes other factors (tribes), or when one or another kingdom has fought for the extension of their power within the “family” and outside of it.

In this respect, from a mythological and historical point of view, the Dardanian factor in relation to the Macedonian one is influential and determinant, as is generally in relation to other Illyrian kingdoms. The Dardanians and Dardania, emerge from the 14th century BC almost actively in all the Euro-Asian developments (founders of Troy simultaneously connected with the Phrygian kingdom and priority also in relation to the Hittite) to “shrink” in the Dardanian kingdom in the center of Illyricum in the 5th century BC, where rivalry begins, together with the well-known wars with the Macedonian kingdom until the middle of the second century BC, when the Macedonian kingdom will be defeated from Rome, while the Macedonian ethnicity, almost in its whole, from an administrative and cultural point of view (during Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire) will be submerged by the Dardanian one.

In order to better see these relations and for a break down in line with the well-known developments from the rise of Macedonia to a world kingdom in the time of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BC, it is necessary to focus on the Dardanians and Dardania and their key role in the genuine passage of the Pelasgians over to the established ethnic and social formations, a prelude starting from Greek mythology, passing from historical memory and to the poetic one (Hesiod, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil and others).

⁶⁴ Idem.

⁶⁵ Idem.

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ For more see: Budimir, Milan “*Grci i Pelasti*”, Beograd, 1952, pp. 51-55; Jokl, Norbert: “*Untersuchungen zur indogermanischen Schprah-und Kulturwiessenschaft – Linguistisch-kulturhistorische Untursuchungen aus dem Bereiche des Albanischen*”, Berlin und Leipzig, 1923; Georigew: “*Hetitische und etruskisch: die hetitische Herkunft der etruskischen Sprache*”, Sofia, 1962.

Thus, according to Greek mythology, *Dardanus* was the son of *Zeus* and *Electra*, daughter of *Atlas* and his brother Jason and Harmonia.⁶⁸ Forced with his son Idal to leave his homeland, Arcadia, he went to Phrygia, which had a Tyrrhenian-Pelasgian population. He is hosted at his home by Cadmus who married or eloped Harmonia. From there he goes on to Teucer and married his daughter Bateian and on the shores of Scandra he founded Troy. He is considered the great-grandfather of the Dardanian tribes living on the site of Mount Ida.⁶⁹

Greek mythology considers also the first king of Troy *Ilos* of a divine origin, seen as the son of *Troy* and nymph *Kaliro*, father of *Laomedon* and grandfather of *Priam*. In Phrygia (Asia Minor) he founded the city of Athena Palada, called in his honor Ilion (later Troy).⁷⁰

This is the most common mythological version of the Dardanus' pedigree, the founder of the tribe and later of the Dardanian people. However, mythology also mentions other genealogy of Dardanus. He is found in different parts of what will be known as the Pelasgian world with a wide outreach. Thus, one of these genealogies claims that the first Corinthian king was Corinthus or Korinthus, who had two wives, with one of them, Electra, giving life to two sons: Dardanus and Iasius.⁷¹ In yet another story it becomes clear that Dardanus' father is neither Zeus nor Corinthus, but rather Corytus or Corythus, who was King of Samothrace. This name Corytus, which was also the ancient name of the Tuscan Cortona, connects Dardanus' birthplace in the Italian version of his genealogy. So, according to this, Dardanus' father is Coritus, the king of Tuscany.⁷²

From Tuscany, Dardanus fled settling in the island of Samothrace and from there to Phrygia, where he then founded Troy. According to this legend, Diodorus adds a sister to Dardanus, who has a brother Jasion. The sister is called Harmonia and in fact this in mythology is the most common opinion about the genealogy of Dardanus, which somehow opens two other important issues: the first is about the Semitic influence on European civilization, as it is concerned with the fact that Cadmus the Phoenician is the son-in-law of Dardanus, and the second issue relates to ethnic Dardanian-Illyrian relations from a different perspective of what we have been taught, as according to this mythical version, Cadmus and Harmonia (Dardanus' sister) fled from Thebes of Boeotia and settled in Illyria among the tribe of the Enchelei. During their time in Illyria, they had a son named Illyrius, by whose name the Illyrians were called, and which, according to this mythological genealogy, Illyrians an off-spring of the Dardanians, although it remains unclear if it were the Illyrians who gave their name to the son of Cadmus or the latter gave them his name.⁷³

For A. Charles this dilemma does not exist, since, according to a mythological version that he presents, Dardanus had married twice, and that the first woman was Chryse, an Archadian, with whom he had two sons: Ideus and Dimas. While the second wife was called Bafia or Basia or Batieia who bore two sons to Dardanus: *Ilius* and *Erichthonius*.⁷⁴

So even their moral genealogy, from the records of the Bible, ranks them among the first peoples from the very genesis. Speaking of Noah's descendants, Genesis⁷⁵ claims they were Shem, Ham and Japheth. The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Jovan, Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.⁷⁶ Jovan's sons were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dardonim.⁷⁷ S. Clark

⁶⁸ Homer: Idem, p. 361

⁶⁹ "Fjalor i mitologjisë", Prishtinë, 1988, p. 62.

⁷⁰ Idem, p. 121.

⁷¹ See Le Fevre, R: "The Destruction of Troy, in Three Books", London, p. 13.

⁷² For more, see: "The Works of Virgil Translated Into English Prose", London, 1826, p. 314, stating: "Dardanus and Iasius had Electra as their mother, daughter of Atlas and wife of Coritus, King of Toscana."

⁷³ See Laçej, Naim: "Tanagra", Lezhë, 2012, pp. 165-166.

⁷⁴ Idem, p. 166.

⁷⁵ See "The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments", London, 1850, GENESIS IX:18.

⁷⁶ Idem, GENESIS, X:2.

⁷⁷ Idem, GENESIS, X:4.

says that the grandson of Jaapheth and Jovan's son Dardonim was Dardanus.⁷⁸ This assessment will also be supported by historians and other theologians who, even in the interpretation of the sacred books, equalize the *Dodonimes* with *Dardanians*. Theologian professors Keil and Delitzsch see the Dardanian *Dadonimes* settled in the entire territory of Illyria or in the north of the Greek tribes.⁷⁹

This unravels the fact that a large part of Illyria's Pelasgian tribes were Dardanians,⁸⁰ with both Arcadia and Epirus seen as a genuine epicenter of the Dardanians as a large tribal family with many tribes belonging to this among the oldest dynasties, where one should even seek for their social and political rise on the historical scene as powerful tribes and kingdoms, which may be known or unknown, but which the ancient authors see them scattered and named as geographic ethnicities.

Regardless of Greek and other legends, Dardanus is traced alternatively in Arcadia as Pelasgian, in Crete, and at times in Etruria, yet, as such, he is at the top of the genesis of the most popular civilizations of the ancient world in general. His true origin is still discussed today precisely because he is not Greek, that is as being connected with the Pelasgians, namely the Dardanians, who played a decisive role in the early antiquity in that most blurring historical passage in regard to records and among the most important developments he set in motion.

However, Dardanians as sons of the Pelasgians with a very wide range (from Asia Minor, Greece, Illyricum and up to Italy), rightly attributed to having played a major role in the ancient world in setting a social, political and cultural equilibrium,⁸¹ were found not only in Greek and Roman mythology, but also among the poets and playwrights of early Greek antiquity to be seen as such by Roman poets as well, only natural for the Muses to be dealing with main actors, ranging between the divine and the earthly power. That is how the Romans and others too viewed the Dardanians.

If, according to Greek mythology, the emergence of Dardanus and Dardanians was the "will" of the gods, who had to engage forever in fights for royal and imperial throne, which had to stretch as far wide as possible towards a world pyramid, according to Homer, in this divine mission, where the Dardanians are seen as the founders of Troy, its leaders during their glory under the "mandate" of gods intertwined with their deeds in a struggle for power. This is what the great poet tells us when he says:

*"Then Dardanus made Erichthonius"
Erichthonius, King of the Trojans
He begot Troy, and Troy had three sons".⁸²*

Before appearing in Troy and being seen as important in the developments that preceded its rise and fall, with their social and political power playing a major role, however, by appearing in Phrygia (Brygia) and among the Hittites (with the first participants in joint wars, and the latter part of the confederation), they emerge deeper in the historic space.

In this dramatic overturn, of course, the Dardans still remain the main actors of many developments, since after the loss of the hypothetical war of Troy, their parts (Galabs,

⁷⁸ See Clark, Samuel: *"The Bible Atlas of Maps and Plans to Illustrate the Geography and Topography of the Old and New Testament and the Apocrypha, with Explanatory Notes"*, London 1868, p. 3 "Gesenius saw that (Thes.p.1266) the word Dardonim can be naturally changed by becoming Dardan, and this opinion is supported by Targmus", (Cited according to Lačej, Naim *"Tanagra"*, 2012, p. 166).

⁷⁹ See Keil, Carl Friedrich dhe Delitzsch, Franc: *"Biblical Commentary On The Old Testament"*, Edinburgh, 1866, p. 164.

⁸⁰ For more, see: Jones, Alonzo Trevier: *"Epires Og the Bible"*, New York, 2004, p. 16: "Dodan was the ancestor of the Dardanians, some of whom live in the place called by them Dardani, adjacent to ancient Troy, on the southern shore of the Marmara Sea. Others, most of them populated Illyria or Illyricum, the country bordering the Adriatic Sea opposite Italy. From here some of their tribes went to Italy, of which the Liburnians and the Venetians are particularly mentioned."

⁸¹ See: Papazoglu, Fanula: "Srednjobalkanska plemena u predrimsko doba: Tribali, Autoriati, Dardanci, Skordici i Mezi", Sarajevo, 1969 and Mirdita, Zef: "Antroponimia dardane në kohën romane", Prishtinë, 1981.

⁸² Homer: *Iliada*, Tiranë, 1979, Song 20, p. 361.

Thunats, Daons, and others) continued south of Italy, where settled and, as seen, will have an impact on the establishment of Rome.

In this dramatic leap, of course, they continue to remain major actors in numerous developments, since after losing the Trojan War a portion of them (Galabres, Thunates, Daoses, etc.) continued toward the south of Italy, where they settled and, as shown, influenced the establishment of Rome.

Thus, in Homer's "Iliad" the heroes were mainly Pelasgians and Dardanians. This is best evidenced by the well-known genealogist of ancient history, Clinton, who by relying precisely on Homer's "Iliad", finds the royal Trojan Dardanian family of having Pelasgian origin.⁸³

Their lining up in the Trojan War "on different sides" surely has to do with the Pisistratus version of the 5th century in order to accommodate the emergence of historical Greece, as it circumvented their role as a foundation of Hellenism.

However, to Homer, Priam, king of Troy, was considered a descendant of Dardanus.⁸⁴ According to him, Dardanus was the first king of Troy, and had given his name to the city of Dardania. Therefore, Priam and his people were called Dardanians, sons and daughters of Dardanus.⁸⁵

Homer mentions the Dardanians in the following lines:

"In the beginning *Dardanus* was the son of Jove."⁸⁶

"*Dardanus* had a son, king *Erichthonius*".⁸⁷

"*Dardanus*, whom Jove loved above all sons".⁸⁸

"Hear me, Trojans, *Dardanians* and allies".⁸⁹

"Trojans, Lycians, and *Dardanians*, lovers of close fighting".⁹⁰

"*Dardanians* were led by the brave son of *Anchises*".⁹¹

Details of the great poet about Dardanians and Troy, on the foundations of which he sees them, as the kingdom they would lead, are not only a product of imagination, or part of Greek mythology. Rather, they also find historical support, which as seen in previous perceptions reviewed, continue to add to the tableau of the key factor connecting the triangle among the Pelasgic, Hellenic and Roman worlds.

Hesiod, too, a contemporary or a little older than Homer, described the Dardanians as sons of Pelasgus who governed Arcadia first, as a place situated in the middle of the Pelasgian centers of Argos and Sparta, from where, according to him, originated most dramatic events that will precede the historical time and all that represents the antiquity.⁹²

More by this important author of antiquity, being an instigator of incredibly important events, assumingly this ancient people moved towards the West in Asia Minor tying its fate closely with Troy, one of whose gates was named "The Dardanian Gate". While the

⁸³ For more see: Clinton, Henry Fynes: "Fasti Hellenici. The Civil and Literary Chronologi of Greece, From the Earliest Accounts to the LV", Oxford, 1834, vol I, p.. 88. According to Clinton, the genealogy of the Dardanian royal family in Troy begins with Dardanus, continues with Erchthonius, Tros, who had three sons: Ilos, Asaracus and Ganymedes, where the first (Ilos) had a son Leomedon, the second (Asaracus) had a son Capus, of whom we have Anchies and last Aeneas. Leomedon, the son of Ilos, had five sons: Tithonus, Priam, Lopus, Clytius, and Hiceton. Priam had a son, Hector. Two other data draw attention from the Homeric pedigree of the Dardanians, the first of which is related to the name of one of the Priam brothers, Clytius, a name which was also held by one of the prominent generals of Alexander the Great; while the second data relates to the name of Troy's successor, Ganymede, a name which Albanians still use today in the form Gannimete(s). (About the latest assessment see Laçej, Naim: "Tanagra", Lezhë, 2012, p. 171)

⁸⁴ "Iliada", III, 38; VII, 89.

⁸⁵ Idem, XVIII, 230.

⁸⁶ Idem, Song XX, Verse 215.

⁸⁷ Idem, Song XX, Verse 219.

⁸⁸ Idem, Verse 304.

⁸⁹ Idem, Verse 456.

⁹⁰ Idem, Song VIII, Verse 173.

⁹¹ Idem, Song II, Verse 819.

⁹² Hesiod: "Fragments", 160.

narrow strip in the Balkan Peninsula was called Dardanelles and, continuing further in the West, in the central part of the Peninsula (today's Kosova, along with Macedonia and southern Serbia) they founded the powerful state of Dardania, one of the most steadfast and among the most important ones.⁹³

With the dramatic events resulting in numerous tragedies, with the attention of artists always challenged by Troy and those that will occur in and around it, Euripides (482-406) BC will also be dealing. On the one hand, he portrays in his dramas Menelaus, king of Argos, his ancestors through Hercules or Heraclius in *Heraclides*, his wife, Helen, Agamemnon's brother, one daughter in two dramas: "*Iphigenia in Aulide*" and "*Iphigenia in Tauride*", another daughter in "*Electra*", and the son in "*Orestes*". On the other hand, Euripides reflected the tragic consequences of Priam's family, king of Troy, in the dramas treating his wife *Hecuba*, daughter of *Andromache*'s son, widow of Hector, his ally, *Rhesus* and his own people in "*Trojan Women*"⁹⁴

The great poet Virgil deals also with the Dardanians and their destiny in his "*Aeneid*" turning them into characters of one of the most important tragedies of antiquity.

"Then he, Aeneas, whom *Dardanian* Ancises, life-giving Venus by the waves of Phrygian Simeont gave birth."

(Book I, 617-618)

"O light of *Dardanians* heart and strength,
He himself incited Gods against *Dardanian* weapons."

(Book II, 617-618)

"O much-suffering *Dardanians*, land when first
Your ancestors were born, that same rich land
Is waiting now for your return. Look for the ancient mother.
Here Aeneas house will rule over the ridges,
And sons and daughters and those born of them."

(Book III, 94-98)

"We've come after you and your weapons, as *Dardania* burnt."

(Book III, 156)

"These are our special domes, here *Dardania* was born."

(Book III, 167)

The ethnic and historical power of the Dardanians and Dardania in its real proportions, from the sixteenth century BC, supposedly of a powerful Euro-Asian kingdom to a reality in the 5th century BC until the 1st century AD, namely to the Roman conquests, actually shows the power of the Macedonians and Macedonia since their dynasty emerging in the 7th century BC to the one of a world empire during the time of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC being raised and declining in relation to this factor viewed always with its components (Poiones, Bryges and others) somewhere in the middle.

However, for real, ethnic and state relations, for a historical view between Macedonians and Dardanians and Macedonia and Dardania, one may talk about the time from the 7th century BC to that of AD, if supported on the southern border of Dardanians and Dardania with the Macedonians and Macedonia, from where the power of one or the other comes.

Although epigraphic, linguistic and archaeological materials are often unable to define the ethnic and lastly state definition between Macedonians and Dardanians as they always melt in the entirety of the larger movements of peoples and their cultures, as well as later

⁹³ Jacques, Edwin: "*Shqiptarët*" ("*Albanians*"), Tiranë, 2007, p. 59.

⁹⁴ Jacques, Edwin: "*Shqiptarët*", Tiranë, 2007, p. 61.

influences from the time of Roman conquest (Romanization and Hellenization during Byzantium), however, the ethno-political borders appear more accessible as they maintain a natural extension of ethnicities, even if differentiated from the common denominator, which in this case it is the Pelasgian-Illyrian. In this regard, lining a definition between the Dardanians and Macedonians from the position of the southern one as viewed by the Dardanians about Macedonians and of the northern one by the Macedonians in relation to the Dardanians highlights the main cultural, social and political factors of the same roots (Pelasgian), as the western position (with Epirotes and Illyrians) points out. Though the southern border of Macedonians with Greeks and Macedonia with Greece reflects a fundamental distinction or an ethnic difference with the Greeks, the Greeks will try to find Hellenism as a social philosophy that will adopt Macedonians to become part of their imperialist politics of the world's empire during the kingdom of Alexander the Great.

So, the ethno political borders between the Macedonians and Macedonia with the Dardanians and Dardania, for the first northern borders and for the second southern borders, always "blurred" with the Piones factor somewhere in their midst (north)⁹⁵ and the Bryges or the Phrygians respectively in the direction of Thrace and Asia Minor share an inevitable, though extremely important point in the triangle between Dardania, Dalmatia and Macedonia and Scardus Mons (Sharr Mountains), namely Korab,⁹⁶ including the part of Tetova (Oeneum) and Gostivar, beyond the Suva Mountain towards the Treska River pertaining to Dardania. From there, the border continued down the peaks of Jakupica to the Vodno village, somewhere south of Bylozar (present-day Veles), where Pcinje river pours into Vardar. This boundary continues along the Ovce Pole Mountains to the tip of the Osogovo Mountains in the southwest of the Zletovo town, with a joint common point of three provinces: Moesia Superior as a triangle between Dardania, Macedonia and Thrace, where the border between Dardanians and Dardania begins.⁹⁷

According to ancient authors, *Bylazori* (Veles)⁹⁸ marks the last southern post of demarcation between Dardanians and Macedonians, though according to Polybius and Titus Livius this was a Paiones city.⁹⁹

Evidently, the ethno political boundaries between Dardania and Macedonia will vary from time to time between the 5th and 2nd centuries in accordance with the power of one or the other kingdom and the wars between them, which will continue even after these kingdoms will be facing Roman threat and its invading wars in their spaces from the second century BC, when they will conquer Macedonia, to continue later, until the first century AD when Dardanians will also lose their kingdom.

MACEDONIANS, EPIROTES, AND GREEKS

⁹⁵ Although the Paeonians are located in the north of Macedonia, in the belt that separates them from the Dardanians, along the cities of Bylazor, Prilep, and Shtip, they have already inhabited a large part of Macedonia, which is no coincidence that before the Macedonian penetration, Peonia was called *Emathia*.

⁹⁶ Korab is seen as the southeastern border of the Dardanians and Dardania, where they border the Penestes, an Illyrian tribe, stretching across the bed of the Black Drin, from Lake Ohrid and runs north to southeast to Sharr.

⁹⁷ Mirdita, Zef: "*O južnoj granici Dardanaca i Dardanije*", VMZA, 3.s.XXXII-XXXIII, 69-92, p. 63.

⁹⁸ According to Tomasheku, the name of Byloza is an Illyrian word "*Buxxy = grad*", explained by Albanian "*ura*" ("*bridge*"), which according to Hahn means: *city-urë*. See in "*Studime shqiptare*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 166. G. Kazorow also shares this view, when he says that the Turks call it "*Köprülü*" = *city of bridges*.

⁹⁹ See: Polyb: V,97, I dhe Liv Tit:XLIV, 26,8: "*Mittit Antigonum (...) qui guberet multitudinem Gallorum ad Byzalozore – Paeoniae ist locus est-castra movere*". Wallbank sees this city also within Paenia, 1940: 63: "*Bylazora, a town in Paeonia commanding the pass over into Dardania*".

The beginning of Hellada, according to Scylax, implying also the end of what is called Illyria by the Hellenes, opens the question of the attitude of the Greeks towards the Pelasgians and their legacy (Illyrians, Epirotes, Macedonians, Dardanians, Peiones, and others in the surroundings) not only on a geographic plain, but also in a social and political one, a stance that implicates them in almost all of their important developments, no matter how much and how it is accepted or not.

This historical view of the Pelasgians has two internal views: an early one, when the Greeks came to Hellada following the Doric immigration (anywhere from mid-twelfth century BC) finding there the “divine Pelasgians”. And, it has the shape of Hellenism from the earliest to the classic, when based on records from antiquity, settlers coming from beyond the sea (based on numerous data from Egypt), after having learned from the Pelasgians all that they had (faith, idols, deities, including the way of the script that they got from the Phoenicians, being a branch of the Pelasgians) will turn to their own well-known social, political and cultural development, among the most important ones of antiquity.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the remains of the Pelasgians, with the exception of Dardanians and Macedonians, will be called Illyrians (Illyrian peoples) and their space Illyria, although there will be distinct tampering with, since they will be mentioned only when in an external relation to the Greeks, and in no way in any reflection within their internal side, from where some kind of truth on them can be drawn.¹⁰¹

But even this would suffice for the truth about a pre-Hellene people to emerge, whom they met there and who served them in the construction of their historical frame about them and their past.

Despite this approach, which can be labeled as documentary from a direct source, remaining inevitable and among the most important ones, from a different and deeper angle, the mythical image on the Pelasgians and their origin is self-asserting showing them as “heavenly people”. By this their spiritual and cultural supremacy is recognized encountered by the settlers upon their immediate arrival to the Pelasgic lands from where they will receive many of their values, helping them to move further. This observation contains Troy and Dardania, and also the civilization of Crete and of Mycenae, as a basic focus of antiquity, which although it will be denied of Pelasgic authorship, by accepting the so-called “pre-Hellenic” stratification being proto-European and “paleo-European”, is placed in relation to the pre-Greeks, being admittedly Pelasgians, and likewise acknowledging also that Troy was Dardanian center. The foundation of Troy, according to a Greek legend is connected to Dardanus, son of Zeus and Goddess Electra, from where the mythological imagination, which is close to truth, will turn them immortal.

Even without this version of the myth, Dardanians and other Dardanian tribes of the 16th century BC are seen as active agents in developments arising from the rise of Troy and its power (in the Hittite empire, of Bryges and others in the Euro-Asian space) whereupon their fate associated with it from its rise to its final fall.

But if Dardanus, the founder of Troy, in Greek memory will remain permanent and honored not only by the works of Homer, being divine and as such immortal inasmuch as untouchable, this does not apply to the descendants of Illyrius (Ilios), first king of the Illyrian lands, called by them Illyrians and their space Illyria, as he came from *king-man*, Cadmus of antiquity, who although brought knowledge and script from Phoenicia, from here Greek civilization supposedly originated with what will appear in the world as Hellenism, his legacy (Illyrians and Illyria) could not be conceived as Hellenes nor keep their eternal honor as the Dardanians of Troy had as “divine Pelasgians”.

¹⁰⁰ For more see: Diodori: *Vepra III*, Chapter 66, p. 257; Jochen Georg von Hahn: “*Studime Shqiptare*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 396.

¹⁰¹ See Straboni: “*Gjeografia*”, Book V/1.

Here and at this issue, in the *father-king* (Cadmus of Phoenicia), missionary who will bring knowledge, culture and script to the Greeks, and the *son-king* (Ilios of Illyria), barbarian and foreign in the “neighborhood”, things seem to fall in place by actually opening the possibility for history to release facts from the mist of mythology to give them the true place and appearance, meaning that in those times *father-king kings* and *kings-kingdoms* could be of the same blood linkage and the same place, meaning also that Cadmus (*father-king*) and Illyrius (*son-king*) may have been in Phoenicia or in Illyria and I no way one in one and the other in another, more so when those countries were divided by a major sea and two opposite worlds.

Here history, unlike mythology, is based on evidence, and as even evidence coming from the ancient Greeks confirm Illyrians and Illyria at a particular time and place even before the Greeks came, it is closer to truth that Cadmus, even as a Phoenician, seen in a fashion as to deny the Pelasgian sons, Illyrians, of earthly kingdom, it presupposes their common link, extending far beyond the sea, the same as it extended to Crete and may be reaching as far as North Africa.

With the natural division between mythology and history coming from antiquity, come also the beginnings of historical coverage of Pelasgians and their historical appearance, coming to us, mostly through their viewpoint, despite how they appear from there, their entirety may be seen, even if like a mosaic of many pieces which they make up.

Therefore, if mythology and popular images with many images and forms are left aside, then the Greek stand on the descendants of Pelasgians comes somewhat clearer, seeing them in their near or distant neighborhood as Illyrians (although as scattered in tribes and tribal kingdoms), an oponym similar to Helleni for Hellenes, or Italy for Italics.

In this generalization Epirotes (Molossians), Dardanians and Macedonians are often exempt. The latter, after being run by them and after accepting the supremacy of the Greek language as an official language, will be seen as Hellenes although they will be considered by numerous ancient authors as barbarians. This takes them unavoidably back to their Pelasgian root from which they cannot be excluded, and if their political behavior during the classical Hellenization (6th-1st centuries) brings them closer to the Hellenes than to their own kinship with whom they, particularly with Dardanians, will engage in permanent and fierce wars, which can be explained as wars of domination within the family, which were inherent in those days, the same as the bloody wars for the throne between brothers, whose origins are related to the ego and the will for power in every being.

It is historically known that many of the same ethnicity and even peoples will dissent on the same basis from here spring various states of the same ethnic group or people, as it happened with the Celtic family, with Baltic and Slavic, branched in many countries, and the like, where geography will often determine the social and political outlook as well as the denomination.

Even without this observation, which should be considered when reviewing internal rapports of large families of peoples from antiquity onwards and realities that have emerged from them (different peoples and later nations and numerous states), direct evidence coming from antiquity make it quite clear that the ancient Macedonians, whose Pelasgian root cannot possibly be denied, little or very little overlap with social and cultural schemes of Hellenism, They rather remain dealing with the views of the Pelasgians as divine people, with a royal order of events since the first tribal organization and onwards, which Dardanians and other tribes would uphold as their state government during all the time until it was ruined by Roman conquerors when they after seven monarchies will go back to Republicanism.

Of this nature was also the project of Alexander the Great on a world empire as a divine view that he had created out of conviction that he was of a divine origin coming from his mother, Olympia, an Epirotan, who had entered Zeus' bed in the form of a serpent.¹⁰²

The conviction that they were fighting for a world empire for which stood Alexander the Great, would also be shared by the Molossian Pyrrhus, who according to not only Greek mythology had direct links with Dardanians, as Epirus in a way would emerge as part of compensation for the loss of Troy to the West, as it will indeed happen with Rome.

Regardless of their implication with the Trojan myth, Dardanians, Macedonians and Epirotes will enjoy special treatment from the known Illyrian definition, involving numerous tribes in the neighborhood of the Greeks and those of others stretching onwards to other parts of the Central, Northern and Eastern Illyricum without excluding those appearing in southern Italy, although Dardanians and sometimes Epirotes will be associated with other Illyrian tribes, while the Macedonians as Hellenized "barbarians". Furthermore, since the appearance of Alexander the Great in 338 to the Roman occupation, Macedonians will be seen as the leading providers of Hellenism. This meant that in subsequent centuries the Philhellenes removed all possible doubts that separates Macedonians from the Greeks, as they will exclude any thinking that they can be related to Dardanians and Epirotes (the first their ancestors and tribe) because of their common Pelasgian origin. Rather, this will be excluded even when having to do with the evidence of ancient famous authors who will continue to treat the Macedonians as foreign, though seen within the Greek social concept of Greek and Hellenism in general (of course once they set their military domination over them).

At any rate, the linguistic assimilation of the Macedonian aristocracy and mandatory involvement of Greeks in the campaign of Alexander the Great to create a global empire eastward, where he, defeating powerful empires one by one will reach as far as India, will not make them Greeks, as it was supposed, nor will deprive them of their Pelasgic origin, as desired.

Rather, it has been assessed that Hellenism as a sudden development of time will clear the way for new insights towards the East, but the state concept for which it will be fought was of Pelasgian origin. This will cause the Macedonians to be seen as Pelasgians, while their conviction of an earthly empire of divine origin, that of a superior kind of *king-man* originated from the gods, in fact, will remain in the Dardanian-Illyrian war mentality for larger space and freedom, a political consciousness that will be reflected in the Molossian Pyrrhus not long after the failure of the project of Alexander the Great in the East, with the only difference that for this purpose he chose the West and the way that some centuries before Aeneas had made, like the closest, the most possible, and above all, the most natural.

However, other evidence, primarily historical and linguistic ones, coming from ancient authors, or by later scholars of comparative linguistics, indicate that the Epirotes were of Pelasgic root, as were the Macedonians and their royal dynasty,¹⁰³ despite of what happened before and after the time of Alexander the Great and regardless of the numerous wars that Macedonians will be waging with the Illyrians, and particularly with Dardanians, being able to subdue them even partially, as it occurred at the time of Philip II, but never being able to make them accept Hellenism as their emblem, which appeared as a copy of what the Greeks had taken and appropriated from them shrinking them within a narrow space and for narrow interests.

Despite hypothetical observations aiming to restore something of the appearance of a beautiful and rather blurred historic landscape, even here, as in other cases, the key word will

¹⁰² "Fjalori i mitologjisë", Prishtinë, 1988, pp. 256-251; Mirdita, Zef: "Mitet dhe mitologji në antikë", Prishtinë, 1988, pp. 38, 43, 226.

¹⁰³ See: Hahn: "Studime shqiptare", Tiranë, 2009, p. 291.

fall on the old ancient authors. Their evidence, although in many cases fragmented and contradictory, are more deserving as through them many of the facts are related to historical developments from where also derived the following basic positions:¹⁰⁴

- Epirotes and Macedonians even in Strabo's time were non-Greeks or barbarians;¹⁰⁵
- Epirotes, Macedonians, and Illyrians were related;
- There are numerous signs that Epirotes and Macedonians made up the core of Tyrrenian-Pelasgians, from where supposedly the most extreme remote tribes of this people played a role in the history of Italy and Thrace;
- The Illyrians were in a wide sense equal to Pelasgians, as were the Dardanians as well, appearing as a separate branch of the trunk.¹⁰⁶

About the first question, which still remains open and contradictions from where stemmed all the various stances, Strabo explains that the "southern peoples are Illyrians and Thracians, stretching as far as Greece, and the Celts intermingled as well".¹⁰⁷

This description in some way responds to the picture of the time of the shared space in its central and eastern part between the Illyrians and Thracians, with the only difference that the Thracians, could be adjacent to the Illyrians in the north-east, but not with the Hellenes, as this was made impossible because of a configuration of Dardanians in the east completely covering the strip between them, which as seen it is also refuted by Strabo's description of the eastern part, assessing that "from the remainder of Europe only the peninsula stretching from the end of the Adriatic to the strait of Ister (Danube). Here live the Greeks, peoples of Macedonia and Epirus, and all those tribes above them reaching as far as Ister and from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. Beyond the Adriatic live the Illyrian tribes and further on to the other Marmara delta and the Dardanelles, the Thracian tribes and between them a few Scythian or Celtic tribes."¹⁰⁸

Despite these errors, which are natural in the light of various information and their arrangement, it appears that Strabo divides the whole peninsula south of the Danube into three parts:

- a) Hellada in the south,
- b) Illyria in the west, and
- c) Thrace in the east.

Although Hellada that he thinks of is not entirely inhabited by Greeks, because in its northern provinces non-Greek, i.e. barbarian, tribes live, namely Epirotes in the west and Macedonians in the east.¹⁰⁹

This definition of the well-known geographer is of great importance since he evidently separates Epirotes entirely from the Greeks, saying "if we enter the Ambracian Gulf we'll find Acarnanians to the right, who are Greeks and Cassiopeians who are Epirotan... Our description in the north and west of the peninsula ends with Epirotan and Illyrian tribes, in the

¹⁰⁴ Idem.

¹⁰⁵ *Strabo*, the great Greek geographer and historian. He was born in Amasia, Pontus, about 63 BCE, and died about 20 AD. Strabo spent part of his life in Rome, and spent the rest of his life traveling to various parts of the Roman Empire, including Greece, Asia, Italy, and Egypt. Based on his personal observations from this trip, and in particular relying on the works of various ancient authors, Strabo wrote his work "*Geographica*" (Geography) in 17 books. Strabo's "*Geography*" has a first-hand importance and is a valuable source for the geography and history of Illyria. The question of the mixing of the Celts, which the well-known geographer mentions, must surely have to do with the remnants of the Celts, who, having penetrated from the north and descended as far as the Aegean, mostly destroying the Dardanelles and Dardania, when they will be defeated by the Greek and Macedonian forces, they will again retreat from the Vardar and Morava valleys to the Danube, with some of them remaining in the east, in the part located between the Thracians and the Dardanians.

¹⁰⁶ See Johan Georg von Hahn: "*Studime shqiptare*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 291.

¹⁰⁷ Straboni: "*Gjeografia*", Book VII, Chapter I.

¹⁰⁸ Idem, Chapter V.

¹⁰⁹ Johan Georg von Hahn: "*Studime shqiptare*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 292.

east with the peoples of Macedonia, stretching up to Byzantium, where after Epirotes and Illyrians come Greek tribes of Acarnanians, Aetolians, Caucones, etc.”¹¹⁰

For Strabo, the Epirotes include Amphilocheians and the Molossi, Athamanes, Aethices, Tymphaei, the Orestae, Paroraei, and the Atintanes, who live as far as the wilds in the highlands of Illyria, who, besides separating them from the Greeks, naturally connects them with Macedonia and Macedonians with whom they will build joint power. Such was the population of the provinces of Lynceus, Pelagonia, Orestias, and Elimeia, who were called Upper Macedonia, though later on it was also called free Macedonia. In these parts people speak two languages: their native Illyrian and Greek.¹¹¹

According to this evidence the following peoples living in Epirus and Macedonia share the same kinship or are Epirotes: Chaonians, Thesprotians, Cassiopeians, Amphilocheians, Molossi, Athamanes, Aethices, Tymphaei, Orestae, Paroraei, Atintanes (with parentheses for Bylliones, Taulanti, Parthini, and Bryges,) continuing with Perisiadieii, Encheleans, and Sesarians.

Along the above ones come six main tribes of Macedonia to the east of Pindus: Lyncestae, Dryopes, Pelagones, Eordi, Elimioties and Eratyres, being in kinship.¹¹²

The perception of Macedonia's space under Strabo and their siege by the Epirotes and the Illyrian tribes can best be understood with the description of the well-known military road “Egnatia” crossing from Durrachium and Apollonia to Thessaloniki when he says that “ the one who follows this path from Apollonia, or Epidamnus, borders to the right with the people of Epirus, stretching to the Bay of Ambracia, its shores awash from the sea of Sicily. On the left lay the mountains of Illyria and tribes residing there as far as Macedonia and Paeonies. Where Macedonia and Payon start up to the Strymon River, Macedonians, Paeonies and some Thracian highland residents.”¹¹³

In regard to the Epirotes, Thucydides too shares the same opinion as Strabo. When speaking of an unfortunate expedition of Lacedaemonians, Ambracians and Chaones against the army of Acarnanians he says:

“With the commander of Lacedaemonians, Cnemus, of the Greeks came the Ambraciots, Leucadians, and Anactorians, and the one thousand Peloponnesians whom he brought; of the barbarians came a thousand Chaonians who were joined in the war by Thesprotians, Molossians and Atintanians led by Sabylinthus, the guardian of King Tharyps.”¹¹⁴

In this part, Thucydides calls barbarians the main peoples of Epirus proper, and the thousand Macedonians sent by King Perdiccas he does not count among the Greeks.¹¹⁵

Evidently, the data coming from Strabo, Thucydides and other ancient, early and late authors show that Epirotes and Macedonians, two of the most powerful nations stretching to the north and west of Greeks. This shows that the entire Epirus and parts going east to the Pelagonia Vardar and up to Pindus appears are not Greek nor of Greek root, though they do not appear closely related to the Illyrian tribes there, as is the case with the Dardanians, who, concentrated in the Central Balkans (from the Sharr Mountains, Drin and Morava Valleys and north to Asia Minor), appear also distinct from the Illyrians, leaving the impression of three different entities sharing the fact of being non-Greeks (at least not as portrayed by the 19th century historiography).

¹¹⁰ Idem, 292.

¹¹¹ Idem, 294.

¹¹² Idem, 294.

¹¹³ Idem.

¹¹⁴ Tukididi: “*Historië*”, Book IV/126.

¹¹⁵ Idem, p. 30.

Indeed, as indicated by the important ancient authors and as can be seen from the further historical developments, these peoples (Illyrians, Dardanians, Epirotes and Macedonians are related), who nevertheless Strabo calls “Illyrian peoples”,¹¹⁶ comprising of numerous tribes often so much mixed that sometimes they appear on either side,¹¹⁷ sharing the same ethnographic link (language and customs), leading to the conclusion that Epirotes and Macedonians are related and form a separate branch of the great Illyrian people. This also applies to Dardanians, adjacent to them and lying in the central part of the peninsula, which above all share common Pelasgic roots.

The common Pelasgian root of these important tribes binding but also dividing the Pelasgic world with the Hellenic one is also admitted by Strabo, who finds in this node a special role of Epirotes and Epirus as a significant space.

”Many also call the Epirotan tribes as Pelasgians, extending their rule to that point.”¹¹⁸

Thus, the famous geographer, aware of the ethnic realities and the past, after stating that the Pelasgians, as an old tribe were spread throughout Hellada, and after making it known that this expansion included Crete as well, the center of old civilization, confirms that Thessaly, located between the Peneus Gorge and Thermopyles and extending to the Pindus mountains, is called *Pelasgic Argos*,¹¹⁹ claiming that Pelasgians were the rulers once and the poet (Homer) too calls Zeus of Dodona Pelasgic “*Sublime Pelasgian Zeus of Dodona*”, while a number of old authors call the Epirotan tribes as Pelasgian, as they reached as far as there (Epirus).¹²⁰

Further, to prove geography as not only being a fact Strabo turns to historical sources from antiquity, quoting Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus but also Erphorius and others who recognized the antiquity of the Pelasgians, but also their legacy expressed through a wide extension of tribes and cities, among which Athens is also mentioned as their center. Even its founder was considered to be the Pelasgian King Mole, who they claim came from Regis-Villa (South Italy), as he had his center there, who together with his tribe crossed the sea to settle forever in Hellada.¹²¹

The seed of the Pelasgians and their descendants in a geographical connection to southern Italy and in a continuous movement from one side to another, inasmuch as it sometimes seems “confusing” at all, has to do with the truth that the Pelasgians, not that they moved there or thereafter, as Strabo says, but because they stretched over the entire Mediterranean and Aegean space even before the Greeks came to be embedded in Greek (thinking about the military phalanx from Egypt). This fact they did not know, though later after learning about it, it is natural that about the movement they created their own various highly controversial stories. Furthermore, in accordance with this, it is likely that the familiar crossing of a part of the Dardanians to Italy, after losing the Trojan War, as interpreted by Homer, Virgil and other authors, as an Aeneas’ wish to redress the loss of Troy somewhere in the West, must have been but a natural shift of that part of Dardanians, three-four centuries before the hypothetical war of

¹¹⁶ Straboni: “*Gjeografia*”, Book V/1.

¹¹⁷ Strabo says of the Antinates that they are Epirotes, while Scylax and Appion write that they are Illyrians (See: Skylaks p. 10; *Appion bell Llyrer* 7). While according to Strabo and Appian, the Dardanians are Illyrians, but Dion Cassius writes that they belonged to the Mezes, (See: *Dio Cassius* VII, p. 495). This will also be said of the Paeonians and the Phrygians, sometimes called Illyrians, sometimes Thracians.

¹¹⁸ Straboni: “*Gjeografia*”, Book V, Chapter 2, p. 221.

¹¹⁹ Straboni: “*Gjeografia*”, Book V/7-8.

¹²⁰ Idem, Book V/7.

¹²¹ Idem, Book V/8.

Troy, to the western part, namely southern Italy, where their grandparents Pelasgians were, the same as they were extended in other parts of the Mediterranean and further in Asia Minor and up to north Africa. The “puzzle” of the Etruscans and the issue of Venetians “descending” from the north, are nothing else but a part of the known prehistoric Pelasgic Paleo-European configuration, on which the later-date Pan-European theory of lyricism will be based going so far as to address them as “Classical Indo-Europeans.”¹²²

Despite this assessment, which will preoccupy many scholars who already understood that the “wandering” of the descendants of the Pelasgians from one to the other shore of the Sea (from the Ion to the western Adriatic), as ancient authors saw it, was no more than a natural movement from one place to another, where they lay, something that will be interpreted in various ways. Even Stephan of Byzantium speaking of the *Pelasgic Epirus*, from where began their “overcrossing” to Italy and vice versa, among whom the most famous was that of Pyrrhus Molosses in order to extend his kingdom to that part which he considered to belong to him, divides it into two parts: *Upper and Lower Pelasgum*.¹²³

For Byzantium both these parts have preserved their authentic ethnic character, with the only difference that the *Upper* grips also a part of Macedonians and a few Illyrian tribes, which to him also relate to the old Pelasgic core, but that the circumstances made them socially and politically different. This applies especially to the Macedonians, who will lead away the idea of Hellenism, as a reflection of the great Pelasgic power, but without turning into Hellenes.

Even the region where the temple of Dodona used to be, built by the Pelasgians was called Pelasgia.¹²⁴

This is also told by Herodotus in writing that this place, called Hellada at his time, belonged to Thesprotia of the well-known Thesprotians, whose kingdom is counted among the first and oldest of Pelasgia.¹²⁵

This is also evidenced by traditions that Plutarch tells when talking of Pyrrhus, stating that “after the great downfall he ruled over the Thesprotians, among the oldest of those who came to this country together with Pelasgus”.¹²⁶

The kinship between the Epirotans of the East and those of the West is also testified by what Apollodorus says as to how Thesprotus and *Macedon* were sons of Lycaones from Arcadia, who was son of Pelasgus¹²⁷ while according to Stephan the Byzantine, *Atintanes* was the son of Macedon.¹²⁸

These different testimonies of antiquity allow for a conclusion to be drawn that Macedonians too were Pelasgian; a testimony backed by that Aeschylus says further claiming that the entire Macedonia lies within the borders of the Argives. He brings forth the testimony of their own king saying:

¹²² For more on Illyrians as classical Indo-Europeans see: Budimir Milan: “*Iliri i prailiri*”, 1952.

¹²³ Stephanus Byzantinus: “*Urbibus et Populis*” (On cities and peoples). The eminent lexicographer from Constantinople (lived in the sixth century AD), is the author of a large geographical lexicon entitled “*Ethnica*”. Stefan of Byzantium’s lexicon is important for the history of Illyria as it informs us not only about many well-known cities and tribes of Illyria and Epirus and from other older publications, but also about cities which are not met in any of the preserved works of earlier writers. Also of interest are the names of some Illyrian tribes, which have not been mentioned until then, found in what he calls the Pelasgian Epirus.

¹²⁴ Homeri: “*Iliada*”, Book XVI, 254; Straboni: “*Gjeografia*”, Book VII, 5, p. 327; Skymnos, v. 450.

¹²⁵ Herodoti: “*Historia*”, Book II/56, cited according to Jochen Georg von Hahn: “*Studime shqiptare*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 16.

¹²⁶ Herodoti: “*Pyrrus*”, 1

¹²⁷ Apollidori, III, 8, 1.

¹²⁸ Eskili (Aeskylos), Verse 249.

*"I am Pelasgus, Palecton's son, this country's king, of me, of the king, the people was named, who toils this country's lands and all the regions along Axios (Vardar) and Strymon from the west. My Kingdom includes the land of Perebeii, Provinces of Pindus, Peoni, Highland of Dodona and the border ends at the sea. Even beyond my kingdom stretches, but this country is called Appia."*¹²⁹

Justin too calls the various tribes of old Macedonia or Emathia Pelasgian¹³⁰ and, according to Ellianos, the father of Pelasgian tribes *Lycaon* was the king of Emathia.¹³¹ According to Aristotle even the *Boetians*, who came from Athena (the main place of the Pelasgians) and Crete (Homer writes that Pelasgians were there too) while passing through Delphi and Japudia sang *"We've come from Athena"*.¹³²

However, the affinity between Macedonians and Pelasgians and their full equalizing with this large family on one hand reveals their broad social and political power in large proportions, known as the Macedonian Kingdom, which in the time of Alexander the Great, in the fourth century BC, stretching as far as India reached its height of fame and was rightly called worldwide and, on the other hand, suggests that the Hellenic factor and Hellenism itself would not be able to reach the scale of such a development outside the Pelasgian pulp and the power it absorbed in all aspects, the epigone of which, from the social and political point of view, was Alexander the Great.

As the rise of Macedonia on the world scale took place in the time of classic Hellenism and its social and political order was the one that produced the same Hellenism, it rightly opened the issue of the Hellenic belonging of Macedonians as an ethnicity, as proclaimed by Phil-Hellenists of the 19th century.

On this theory, various constructions of political nature are still present, though from genuine Hellenes they were treated as "barbarians". This also opens up the issue of the character of the Macedonian Kingdom, which also from the Philhellenism of the last century is denied any authenticity beyond the Hellenic political matrix. It is well known that Macedonia was an authentic patriarchal kingdom with king (Basilueus) military commander, high priest and judge,¹³³ like other kingdoms from the Pelasgian family (Dardanians, Illyrians, and Epirotan), and in what would later be called Greece, finally conquered by Alexander the Great, the Polis rule was dominated: *city-states* (Sparta and Athens), which fought between each other and which the Macedonian Kingdom devalued.

However, the rise of the Macedonian Kingdom cannot be seen out of the power of certain tribes living in the common space known as "*Emathia*". This word, according to some interpretations, fits well in the nature of the Albanian language from its root "*madh, madhe*" from where comes "e madhe – great" – "*emadhia*" and then, in pronunciation it might have received the well known form of *Macedonia* appearing as such only from the classical era.

That *Emathia* is the oldest form proof lies with Homer, who never knew of the word Macedonia.

¹²⁹ Idem.

¹³⁰ Justin, VII 1 (*Macedonia ante, nomine Emathionis regis, Emathia cognominate est. Populus Pelasgi, regia Boetia dicebatur*).

¹³¹ Aeilon, "*De natur.anim.*" X, 48, cited according to John Georg von Hahn. "*Studime shqiptare*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 299.

¹³² See Straboni: "*Gjeografia*", Book IV/1.

¹³³ See: Niebuhr, Berthold-Georg: "*Vorträge ber alte Geschichte*", Bonn, 1830 dhe Curtius, E: „*Griechische Geschichten*“, 1878.

As we learn from the ancient authors, what would later be called *Macedonia* included, as Strabo describes, all the plains from Axios (Vardar) and Haliacmon, bordering with the Epirotes and Paeonians. Peneus was at the border with Macedonia in the north. In addition, Olympus was in Macedonia.¹³⁴

Historical sources reveal that after Aigeai and Edessa, Pella will be the capital of the country, which during the time of Philip II saw a great development that began after the Peloponnese war (431-404 BC), though they were still treated as barbarians and moreover Macedonia's social and political life was inconsistent with Greece because of the fact that on the one side there was the kingdom (Macedonia) and on other polis-states (Athens, Sparta).¹³⁵

Thus, Macedonia was built little by little by the conquests and annexations, though the kingdom was Hellenized much faster than its people as it was the Greek language and the social order that made this possible in relation to the claims of power expansion towards the south and proceeding to the east. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the power of the Kingdom of Macedonia began precisely in 338 BC, at the Battle of Kreos, when Alexander the Great conquered the polis-states, imposing upon them the crown of the Macedonian Kingdom, continuing from there with the conquests to the East, conquering one by one the kingdoms and empires of the time.

Although the rise and the great name of the Macedonian kingdom appears to be mostly linked to Greece and Hellenism often identifying with it, yet the more biased form of this historical appropriation cannot conceal the Pelasgian-Illyrian origins of the Macedonians, as it cannot hide the fact that Macedonia was a different ethnicity from that of Hellenes, even in circumstances when Alexander the Great accepted the Greek language as his imperial official language and with it leaving behind an indelible testimony, though ancient and other authors continue to call it “different” and “barbaric”, which not only kept their mother tongue, but even preserving it internally as a military command language. From a philological point of view this raised the issue of the true Macedonian language and its origin, as not being Greek; it must have come from the “barbaric” family, the Pelasgian.¹³⁶

Certain names and toponyms from the space of ancient Macedonia (Emathia), often attributed to the Macedonian language, such as *Peleo*, *Olimp*, *Osa*, *mal* and others, names and toponyms that the old Greek also acquired are treated by many paleophyllologists as Pelasgian or of old pre-Caucasian and pre-Hellene lexicon, a fact in favor of what was mentioned above coming from ancient authors about the affiliation of the Macedonians to the Dardanian-Illyrian-Epirotan family deriving from the Pelasgic trunk.

Thus, according to X. Crispi, the *Pella* region in ancient Macedonia, where Alexander the Great was born, is related to the old word *Pela* – *Alb. Pelë (Mare)*, which might have come because of the famous horses from where came also Alexander’s well-known horse Bucephalo.¹³⁷

There are also numerous other words from the old Macedonian which Crispi connects with the Albanian, with which, if not else, the large evidence coming from ancient authors about

¹³⁴ See Aref, Mathieu: “*Mikenët=Pellazgët*”, Tiranë, p. 492.

¹³⁵ See Jarde, A : “*La formation du puple grec*”, Paris 1923, p. 394.

¹³⁶ See Plutarch: “ τοις Ἑλλησι τοις Μσκεδοσι” (Plutarch’s Life); J. Baptis. Croph. “*Lingua macedonicam peculiari dialecto a reliquis graecae linguae distinctam fuisse dubium non est – Macedonian language is no doubt different from other dialects of Greek*,” “*Antiquitates Macedonia*”, Book 2, Chapter V.

¹³⁷ See Plutarch “*Alexander’s Life*”, cit. according to Crispi, Giuseppe, Xhuzepe “*Shqipja nënë e gjuhëve*” (“*The Albanian – a mother of languages*”, Tirana 2009, p. 51.

the differences between Macedonians and Greeks and the affinities between the Macedonians and other members of the Illyrian family, where they are mostly seen, show plainly that Macedonian and Greek were two different languages.¹³⁸

The fact that Macedonians and Hellenes spoke different languages made Hahn's assumption stronger that the Macedonian language could be a Pelasgian vernacular. This came after comparing some old Macedonian words, as classified by philologist G. Sturzii,¹³⁹ having a close affinity with Albanian and certainly none with the old Greek. These words included λισσον, το θυμλου ("i lartë"= Alb. *lis-i* as in Lat. *Arbar* against Celtish Alb - "i *nal-të*"; *αραπανοι* – *përrua* (Albanian); *γοδα* – *sorra* (Albanian); *γοτον* – *derr* (Albanian); *γραωιον* – *dritë* (Albanian), etc.¹⁴⁰

The spell over the records of ancient authors, especially those related to the reports of old Macedonians with the Hellenes, is not intended to highlight only what the famous lexicon of Stefan Byzantine presented fifteen centuries as an authentic factum of time, which goes even further for another five to six centuries, but to reflect the historical realities upon which the ethnicity that has emerged from the pelagic root, which has been neither distracted nor out of reality, as can be seen from biased observations.

Going over the records by ancient authors, especially those dealing with ancient relations of old Macedonians with the Hellenes is not intended to highlight only what the famous lexicon of Stefan Byzantine fifteen centuries ago presented as an authentic factum of time, going for another five to six centuries back, but rather to reflect the historical realities upon which the ethnicity emerging from the Pelasgic root, which has been neither distracted nor out of reality, as biased observations see it. It is even more complex because its branches extend into an ethnographic geographically linked area of Central Europe across the entire Illyrian Peninsula and Asia Minor open to other parts of the Mediterranean, especially in Italy, where most importantly it is about the Etruscans (Tyrrhenians), whose mystery has preoccupied many scientists, the most unresolved that it seemed, those old people showed no similarity or fraternity with the Greeks, Italians, Goths, the Balto-Slavs and others, actually turning the issue back to the Pelasgians, just as Homer said when in his *Iliad* he speaks about the Trojans (mostly Dardanians) who will cross the sea and go to Italy indemnifying the lost Troy with something (Rome) or as the story has been retold by Virgil at the "Aeneid".

THE EMPOWERING OF THE KINGDOM OF MACEDONIA DURING THE TIME OF PHILIP II

In the historical triangle of Dardanian-Illyrian-Epirotic kingdoms, which relied on tribal societies from where ethnically united rose to the dimensions of dynasties, a special place also occupied the Macedonian ones, originating from the royal family of the Thermenids, whose predecessors were called "Argeads",¹⁴¹ descendants of Argeas, whom mythical sources call the

¹³⁸ See: Polibius XVII: "The three peoples: Aeolians, Achaemenids and Macedonians speak the same language, but this was not Greek."

¹³⁹ See: Struzii, F. G: "*De dialecto Macedonia et Aleksandrina*", Book 8.

¹⁴⁰ See: Hahn, J. G von: "*Studime shqiptare*", Tiranë 2009, p. 308.

¹⁴¹ See: Hammond, N. G. L : "*A History of Macedonia*", 1981, p. 481.

son of Macedon, offspring of Zeus. But even in the historical era, the royal trunk of Macedonia is seen linked to the mythical kings of Argos, among them, the first was Argeus, in the 7th century BC. Then comes Amniastes I, vassal to the first Darius.

Following him came Alexander I, followed by Alcetas II, the last of the dynasty. However, Alexander I is known as the father of the new Macedonian dynasty with his son Perdiccas II taking over the kingdom in 448. After him come the following: Arkesos and Arkesos II, and this root ends with Orestes, the latter starting with the next new dynasty directly from Alexander I with the arrival to the throne of his son Amintas I in 454 BC. He is followed by Amintas II, who marries the Illyrian princess Eurydice and gives birth to Alexander II, Perdiccas II and Philip II. These three were therefore Illyrians from their mother side Eurydice.

The first two were killed, while Philip II, an Illyrian nephew, married a Dardanian princess from Bardhyl's roots and gave birth to a son 10 years before Alexander, but then married Molossia's Olympias. Out of this marriage Alexander the Great came to life. From the chronology of the last kings, it turns out that Philip II and Alexander III or Alexander the Great are of Dardanian-Illyrian origin. Evidently, the old Macedonian kings had no blood connection through marriage to Hellenes but rather only with the Dardanian-Illyrians.

Despite the genealogy of the Macedonian kings and their ties with the royal Dardanian-Illyrian families, something natural under the circumstances, obviously the rise of the Macedonian kingdom to a regional and later in the time of Alexander the Great world power is, in addition to this, closely related to Greece and its developments, which, in particular those having to do with the transition from classical period to that of Hellenism in the 5-4th century, which was then followed on one side with the crisis of the Greek polis-states and on the other with the empowerment of the Macedonian kingdom of Philip II, since he came to power in 359. These diverse developments, however, paved the way for an unstoppable historical process, as Macedonia under the rule of Philip II, after solving many problems with its northern neighbors (defeating the Illyrians and conquering their lands up to Ohër) and abolishing the local dynasties (of Elymians, Lynkestis, and Orestians) after having strengthened the army with the creation of the Phalanx units and the internal unity of the state, headed towards the parts of Thrace encroaching the interests of Athens. Thus, in 357, he conquered Amphipolis in Thrace (the Athenian colony in the Strait Delta) and opened the way to the Pangaion Mountain. In 356 he conquered Pydna. Athens and the entire Greece saw these actions as clear signs of the expansion of Macedonian hegemony towards them. Indeed, those were followed by conquering Halkidiki. After the invasion of the city of Olynthus, the Thracians were forced to sign peace with Philip II, whereby Macedonia's power in Thessaly and other parts was accepted, which forced the Athenians to sign the Peace of Philocrates in 346. With this peace, Philip II's conquests from Thrace to Thermopylae were recognized.¹⁴²

The Peace of Philocrates had a double reflection: among the Macedonians who were already feeling the responsibility of delivering Macedonia and Greece from the pressure of Persia in the east and the Greek polis-states (Athens, Sparta) forcing them into accepting the Macedonian hegemony and adapting to it so that the power of the neighboring North could also be used for internal consolidation and for settling account with the Persians. Of course, in this regard, Philip II appeared cautious with Athens, which was a naval power, as well as with the others, so that his hegemony in that part would not look like a classic invasion, but rather as a mutual agreement consistent with common goals, among which, however, the struggle against Persia was what united them. To strengthen this conviction, Philip II, in the year 338, summoned a convention meeting in Corinth with representatives of all Greek independent units to bring mutual relations to a consent (Greek polis-states) with Macedonia. At this convention, Philip II dictated peace to Greek city representatives in the form of a general and lasting agreement, as he called it, which would be beneficial to all. At the convention, Philip

¹⁴² Papazoglu, Fanula: "Istorija helenizma – Epoha Alexandra Velikog", Beograd 1970, pp. 40-41.

II dictated peace to Greek city representatives in the form of a general and lasting agreement, as he called it, which would be beneficial to all. With this peace agreement, Phillip II managed to create a special relationship with the Greek polices by virtue of the attachment of a military alliance placing himself over the rest but at the same time maintaining their autonomous status.¹⁴³ Thus, the Corinthian agreement was a victory for the Greeks themselves and the loose relations between the polis-states, as it prevented mutual struggle that troubled them continuously, while providing autonomy and freedom in relation to each other, which would be reflected in the overall relationship, in particular with those of free passage in the sea waters which emerged as a cause for ongoing wars between them. This will also be reflected in mutual polis-states agreements, such as that of Athens with Sparta in 375, for starting an alliance against Thebe. The role of Phillip II in this process was great and decisive as it forced an inner peace between the Greek polis-states, in which case they somehow joined on common interests, indirectly setting the Macedonian hegemony over Greece on the well-known concept of “unity with the preservation of divisions”.

This hegemony, the first of its kind, had a great impact on the development of Hellenism and its putting on the rails of a movement, which evidently, with the coming to power of Alexander the Great, will pave the way for the World Empire as a universal model of unification of the Macedonian-Greek world with that of the East.

The role and place of Philip II in this development is not only decisive, but rightly taken as the most important, in many cases considered a key role, even greater than that of Alexander, as he built the structure and concept of all political and social circumstances of this historical development.

With this said, two important moments should be considered: the framework of Macedonian hegemony in relation to the Greek, interconnecting the various forces of the polis-states, and the idea of a war against Persia, which enjoyed general consensus and was even motivating for all social strata, including philosophers (Isocrates, Aristotle, and others) who, towards Philip II's hegemony held an “understanding” view that he had to take over the war against Persians, a role which could be accepted by the Hellenic world.

Indeed, here and on this issue, the Greek political and social life will gain new impulses by which it will overcome the anxiety of austerity from internal wars to an outward, obviously hegemonic liberation in relation to Persia. Indeed, on this issue, the Greek political and social life will gain new impulses by which it will overcome the anxiety of austerity from internal wars to an outward, obviously hegemonic liberation in relation to Persia. One of those who will publicly open and defend Macedonian hegemony in relation to Greece will be Isocrates. In his famous speech “Philippos”, he will view the whole issue at the prism of the idea of a “Greek union”, which would turn politics into universalism rather than an internal destruction of power struggle, as it was happening in the circumstances as Athens and Greek democracy in general were in a deep crisis being unable to answer numerous open issues seeking for a “rescue” in conflicts with neighbors, although this was reflected in the weakening of what was being considered as “the free Greek world”. Isocrates came openly in defense of the idea of the Greek union on the part of Philip II, provided that he took over the war struggle against Persia. In a letter to Philip II, Isocrates sought a threefold crown for him: first of all that of the benefactor of Greece, so to help from within to face the deep social and political crisis; that of the king of Macedonia, so that the monarchic model, which Demosthenes and others saw as a threat to freedom and democracy, remained only within the Macedonian space; and that of the

¹⁴³ On the Corinthian Agreement see: Wilhelm, A: “*Attische Urkunden I: Urkunden des korinthischen Bundes*”, Wien 1911, p. 165; Willken, U: “*Beiträge zur Geschichte des korinthischen Bundes*”, München 1917, faqe 10; Schwahn, W: “*Heresmatrikel und Landfriede Philippes von Makedonien*“, Beith, 1930, faqe 21, Schehl: “*Zum korinthischen Bund v.j.338-7 v.chr*“, Jahreschrift d.österreichischen archäologischen Institut, Wien, no. 21- 1930.

despot of the barbarians, so that they were prevented from any opportunity to influence the social and political life of the Greeks.¹⁴⁴

This opinion of Isocrates, that the King of Macedonia should be a hegemon for the Greeks, in the sense of their political unification but without touching upon the autonomous structures of the polis-states, and despot for the barbarians (namely the Illyrians, Dardanians and others in the north) Aristotle too will consent, even though neither the well-known publicist nor the great philosopher, son Alexander's teacher, were convinced that he could remove the differences between Greeks and Barbarians from the fact that he came from that world though the Macedonian hegemony as a powerful social and political center would be useful to barbarians to be free of despotism if they lived in the circumstances of a Greek society.

Greek philosophical and political thinking about Macedonian hegemony and its mission in the circumstances when Philip II had almost set up a state and military framework and was in motion, reflected by sending a military expedition to Attala of Asia Minor to enter in war with Persians, seemed a right one and even an "illusion" of the moment that Philip II was killed by Pausanias in an assassination attempt on the marriage of his daughter Cleopatra in gesture of retaliation.¹⁴⁵

However, evidently, the deeds of Philip II, built during twenty-four years of government, in which he managed to turn the kingdom of Macedonia from a common despotate to the greatest power of Illyricum, uniting and integrating Greeks and Polis-states within a system, without affecting their autonomy and social and political structures, will not collapse, even though it will be first opposed by Greek polis-states, namely those hoping they could help them the most. Instead, he will be his son, Alexander the Great, who will continue his work, giving the dimension of a world empire, among the most powerful and among the world's most civilized.

MACEDONIAN KINGDOM DURING THE TIME OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

The climax of the ancient Macedonia's history is connected to Alexander the Great (356-323 BC)¹⁴⁶ a place in the north of the Greek cultural space, considered "barbarian" by them, which he turned to a world empire. Though, evidently before, Macedonia was involved in constant struggles with the Illyrian rivals, Dardanians and Epirotes. In addition, within the efforts to extend power between the 6th and 6th centuries, the Macedonian kingdom was focused on subjecting rather than invading, Greek polis-states (Athens and Sparta), using the Persian wars (500-448 BC) so that in an alliance with King Darius I achieve his goals. After the end of the Persian wars with Macedonia fighting on the Persian side, the Macedonian king Alexander of Macedonia provided a favorable position in relation to the Greek polis-states, albeit alliances and ties with them were never without trouble leading even to many wars, as was the case of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) and the one when Potidaea left the

¹⁴⁴ See: Pelerman, S: "Isocrates Philippus, a Reinterpretation, Historia", 1957, page 306; Stroheker, K.F: "Zu den Anfängen der monarchischen Theorie in Sophistik", 1952, p. 318; Wilcken, U: "Philipp II von Makedonien und die panhellenischen Idee", Berlin, 1929;

¹⁴⁵ See: Wust, F.R: "Philipp II von Makedonien und Griechenland in den Jahren von 346-338", München 1938; Choipoit, V: "Filippe II de Macedonie", Paris, 1936.

¹⁴⁶ Alexander the Great was born in 356, the son of King Philip II of Macedonia and Queen Olympia, daughter of the king of the Molossians. Plutarch says he was convinced he was the son of Zeus. Despite the legends, little is known about Alexander's childhood. What is known, however, has to do with the fact that his father, Philip II, brought the philosopher Aristotle to the court to educate his son in mathematics, philosophy, and art. (See: Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "Alexandri ananasis Continens", Book I-III, Lipsiae, Teubner, 1907).

Peloponnese League, with the Macedonian king, Perdiccas II, supported this and other cities of Chalcidice, entering into new conflicts with Athens, which were supported by Perdiccas' brother, Philip. A little later, however, Macedonia and Athens joined in a new alliance.

The accession to the throne of Alexander the Great, though looking premature, as he had to take the throne from his father, King Philip II, who in 336 BC was killed in the capital by a guard during the wedding ceremony of his daughter, Cleopatra with the king of Epirus, Alexander, it in fact represented the greatest historical turning point for Macedonia's rise to a kingdom succeeding in crossing the boundaries of the Illyrian-Greek world in which it had been for more than three centuries to reach that of a world empire.

Rising to the size of a world empire took Macedonia eastward, initially to defeat its main opponent - Persia, from where it would move further as far as India. His empire extended to Egypt as well, where he was crowned emperor, achieving the proportions of a world empire, among the largest of the time, of a cosmopolitan character, because in addition to the spread of Hellenism, it also spread civilization everywhere it went, whose traces survived the times.

Before starting the path of the first great triumph unseen before in the history of mankind, Alexander the Great, in 336 BC, though young and inexperienced, had to strengthen the power he inherited from his slain father. Within a year, he managed to secure the Corinthian League, suggesting that it was not just a peace deal as understood by some who had begun to oppose it, but rather a political-military alliance run by the Macedonian kingdom, with the purpose of the war against Persia. Of course, to come to this, to restore the faith that had begun to be lost after Philip II's assassination, Alexander the Great, had to use force against some parts of Thessaly and Central Greece that were beginning to declare themselves "independent" against the League of Corinth. Alexander's tough actions in these parts as well as his demonstration of willingness to defend it by military means, forced Delphi, Athens and other cities to accept Macedonia's hegemony. This happened at a meeting of the League in Corinth, in which Alexander was received with honors being entrusted to start the war campaign against Persia.¹⁴⁷

The victory over the Greeks in Corinth also required the reign of the royal power in the northern part, Thrace and Illyria, included in the kingdom by Philip II, where the uprisings broke out. So in the spring of 335, Alexander the Great was forced to start a military campaign initially against first the Triballi in the north and then against the Illyrians in the central part.

Obviously, the Triballi were one of the most powerful tribes of northeastern Illyricum, whose ethnic space, according to Herodotus and Thucydides, stretched along the southern and western Morava to the west of the river Iskera (Danube).¹⁴⁸ According to a number of ancient authors, the Triballi were seen as "Illyrian branches" speaking "the same language",¹⁴⁹ though their ethnicity was divided in accordance with the social and political structures that had been established during the Dardanian kingdom, that of Thrace and the likes in the area, with certain authors seeing the same in Thrace, and sometimes as an "autonomous" Dardanian-Thracian mix.¹⁵⁰

Despite these contradictions confirming the power of the Triballi in the area during antiquity, especially at the time of the rise of the Kingdom of Macedonia as a world power blowing from the capture of Illyricum and continuing to Asia Minor, Persia and India and the African part of Mediterranean, Alexander the Great marched with 15,000 soldiers, which after

¹⁴⁷ Wilcken, U: "Alexander der Grosse und der Korinthische Bund", Berlin 1922, pp. 97-118.

¹⁴⁸ About the extent of the Triballi and their kingdom see at : Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "Historia Successorum Aleksandri" at "Scripta Monasterii et fragmenta" S,a,7 at "Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë" ("Illyrians and Illyria in ancient authors"), Prishtinë, 1979, p. 239 and Herodotus: "Historien" at "The Cambridge's ancient history. The prehistory of the Balkan", p. 837; Vulić, N: "Die Sitze der Triballer zur Römerzeit", at „Wiener Studien“, 24-1902;

¹⁴⁹ Chalkondyles,Laonikos:"Demonstrations of Histories", I, Athen,1996, pp. 23-24.

¹⁵⁰ Papazoglu, Fanula: "Istoria helenizma", p. 78 and Stojić, Milorad: "Tribali u arheologiji i istorijskim izvorima", 217.

crossing the Danube quenched a revolt in Thrace and from there, crossing the Balkan mountains, he entered the Triballi kingdom, from where he would then settle account with the Illyrians.¹⁵¹ The Lygines River saw the main battle with the Triballi, who were defeated due to a deception when the Triballi refugee children were placed in front of units moving towards the positions of the Triballi.¹⁵²

To save the children and according to an agreement with the Macedonians, the Triballi fighters were drawn to the other side of the forest, where they fell into an ambush set by Alexander for them. Despite the trap and treachery, the Triballi showed great resistance, though Alexander's phalanx had been ruthless. To avoid massacre, the Triballi king Sirmos had ordered a withdrawal. Alexander the Great went on a chase against the Triballi king. But he did not succeed in settling accounts with him because, on the other side of the Danube, he met an army of the Goths who had come to the help of the Triballi king Sirmos. On his return, he met the Triballi representatives and their Thracian neighbors to seek friendship. Alexander accepted their offer and made peace with the Triballi and Thracians in the form of an alliance.¹⁵³

During the campaign, evidently Alexander the Great also hosted "refugees of the Celts from the Adriatic", which according to Ptolemy represents the first mention of the Celts in Illyricum.¹⁵⁴

After peace with the Triballi and Celts, Alexander the Great, while continuing his campaign against the Paiones, reportedly one of the most powerful tribes inside Illyricum, the Autariates, were about to attack his army during his return. To avoid a clash with the Autariates, at the upper part of Struma, Alexander had a meeting with the king of the Agrianes, Longar, with whom he had good relations. Through them he reached an agreement with the Autariates to pass through their lands to the south without harm to his army.¹⁵⁵

After the agreement, passing through Paionia and Pelagonia, walking along the Erigon River, Alexander headed towards Pelion, the strongest city in the country occupied by Cleitus. At Eordae River, Alexander raised his defense and decided to attack the city the next day. According to Arrian, Cleitus had prepared a double defense: inside the city walls and outside on the rolling hills, making it difficult for Alexander to fight on both sides. Even here, Alexander had used a trap and a trick, as he did with the Triballi. But this time, he used some of his units for the deception sending them inside the city to stage a flight, as he would attack the forces of Cleitus on the hills, supported also by Glaukus of the Taulantes.¹⁵⁶

Alexander did not stay for long in Illyria, as he became aware of a similar uprising in Greece, conjuring up during the campaign he had against the Triballi in the north.¹⁵⁷

The center of the uprising was Thebes, which was among the first to rise up against Macedonia. The uprising was inspired by Demosthenes, a fiery opponent against the Macedonians, as well as by the false news that Alexander had been killed in the war against the Triballi, being spread over the area. At Cadmus, Alexander tried to reach an agreement with the Thebans to join the Corinthian agreement. But they did not accept it. In the battle against the Thebans at Cadmus, Alexander the Great used its popular "Phalanx" units, which massacred

¹⁵¹ On the campaign of Alexander the Great against the Triballi and Illyrians see: Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "*Alexandri Anabasis*", First Book, Chapter 4, Par. 1. Vulic, N: "*Alexander Zug gegen die Triballer*", 1909, p. 40; Beloch: "*Griechische Geschichte III-2*", p. 352.

¹⁵² On taking the children of the Triballi hostage and using them as a vanguard on the battlefield see at Arriani, Flavius I "*Alexandri Anabasis*", Book I, Chapter 6, which describes the retreat of the Triballi on the other side, in the part of the trap that Alexander the Great had laid for them.

¹⁵³ Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "*Alexandri Anabasis*", Book One, Chap.. 4, Item 6 te "Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë", Prishtinë, 1979, pp. 234-235.

¹⁵⁴ Papazoglu, Fanula: "*Istoria helenizma*", p. 78.

¹⁵⁵ Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "*Aleksandria Anabasis*" at "*Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë*", Prishtina, 1979, pp. 234-236;

¹⁵⁶ Idem.

¹⁵⁷ Arrianus, Flavi Lucius "*Aleksandria Anabasis*" at "*Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë*", Prishtinë, 1979, pp. 234-236; Plutarku: "*Alexander*", 1.10, pp. 5-7 and Justin: "*Historiarum Philippicarum*", Book XLV,9, 6-7; Diodor: "*Bibliitheke historike*" 16, 94-17 and Gehrke, Hans-Joachim: "*Geschichte der Hellenismus*", Munchen, 2003, p.. 144.

over 6,000 insurgents. The fate of Thebes, Alexander the Great, was left in the hands of the Sinedrion - the military connection to Corinth, with the city was almost completely destroyed, while 30,000 citizens turned into captives. Only the poet Pindar's home remained auspicious.¹⁵⁸

The massacre of Thebes pushed Athens and others to submit to Alexander the Great, who took no military action against Athens and its neighbors despite the great anti-Macedonian campaign they had launched during the time he was in war with the Triballi and Illyrians. Instead, as his father Philip had done, he accepted peace with Athens as well as "reconciliation" with them as his purpose was not the invasion or the submission of the Greeks, but rather getting them under the crown of his kingdom as an autonomous unit, a state to be accepted by the Greeks, always under the justification that the Macedonian hegemony served the war against the Persians, which for the Greeks appeared as a key matter.

In the spirit of these developments, which will strengthen the power of Alexander the Great, his military campaign against Persia must also be viewed, turning into one of the greatest wars in the history of mankind. It, however, had a necessary prelude in the passing of Alexander the Great army to the part of Asia Minor, where Greek areas occupied by Persia had long been invariably threatening the interior.

Crossing over to the Asian part with a 44,000-strong army, Alexander launched in the spring of 334, whereupon he crossed to Hellespont over at Sestos, from where at Abidos he headed to the ruins of Ilion (Troy). There he honored the memory of Achilles and headed through the Northeast to the banks of Propontida, where the Persian army waited, consisting mainly of local units, the so-called Satraps (Lydians, Phryges and Cappadocians) serving Persia and led by the Greek Menon.¹⁵⁹

The wars of Alexander the Great with the Persians began with the Battle of the Granicus River in May 334 BC, which he won due to a new military strategy, although he also suffered significant losses.

Following the battle, Alexander the Great opened his way to Asia Minor. After their defeat at Granicus, the Persians were unable to further stop Macedonian military penetrations. However, other opponents too were hardly showing a will to go to war which they were about to face. Among the first to surrender without war was the Satrap of Lydia, Sardis. Without a fight, Alexander the Great entered other cities in Asia Minor, those of Aeolis and Ionia, among which, Ephesus, the most important port of Asia Minor.

In these parts, Alexander the Great was welcomed everywhere as "a rescuer from the Persian conquest". The triumphant entry of the Macedonian army was followed with decisions by Alexander the Great to bring down the local satraps and tyrants who served the Persian invaders. In these parts democratic power was established.¹⁶⁰

However, in the cities of Miletus and Halicarnassus, Alexander the Great faced the last Persian advance-guard in Asia Minor, who were trying to stop him or somehow make it difficult for him to reach Persia in order to give him a proper military response there. In these important coastal cities, numerous military contingents were concentrated, assisted also by the naval power, which the Macedonians would be unable to resist as they had no naval fleet of their own with them. But Alexander the Great decided to lay siege from all sides, interrupting help from the outside and the sea. This yielded fruit. After a few months, the cities surrendered, and with their fall, the takeover of the western coast of Asia Minor was complete, leaving the way open for taking Asia Minor proper. Alexander decided to launch the in the next spring. He

¹⁵⁸ Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "*Aleksandria Anabasis*", II, Chap.3. Item 7, at "*Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antikë*", Prishtinë, 1979, pp. 234-236; Gehrke, Hans-Joachim: "*Geschichte der Hellenismus*", Munchen, 2003, p. 144 and Beloch, Karl Julius: "*Griechische Geschichte*", 2, bd. 3.2. p. 361.

¹⁵⁹ For more see: Curtius, Rufus: "*Historiae Aleksandri Magni Macedonis*", 3, 12-17; Droysen, Gustav Johann: "*Gesichte Alexanders des Grossen*", Munchen, 1954, p. 185; Fox, Robin Lane: "*Alexander der Grosse*", Stuttgart, 1974, p. 229; Fox, Robin Lane: "*Alexander der Grosse*", Stuttgart, 1974.

¹⁶⁰ Droysen, Gustav Johann: "*Gesichte Alexanders des Grossen*", Munchen, 1954, p. 185; Curtius, Rufus: "*Historiae Aleksandri Magni Macedonis*", 3.

returned to Gordion, where he concentrated his troops for the upcoming battles from Chalcis and Cappadocia against Persia.

The successful completion of the first phase of the penetration of Alexander the Great in the western part of the coast of Asia Minor presents its liberation from the centuries-old Persian invasion. Liberation also implied the organization of the governance of Asia Minor polices. The liberated lands did not join Macedonia, but a special part of its empire in this part of the growing world. As a form of administrative organization it was preserved by the *satrapes*, as the basic administrative unit with *satraps* at the head of civil and military power. For Alexander the Great, it was important that the administrative arrangement of these units provided the collection of tax, necessary for the campaign. During the liberation of these areas, Alexander the Great restored the traditions and dynasties to the people. Thus, the Lydians received their own old laws. And, in Caria he restored Mausolus' sister Ada into power.¹⁶¹

However, initially, Alexander the Great led his army through Asia Minor taking over the Cappadocia, Phoenicia and the famous Gordian's Knot. From there he arrived at Cilicia and took the capital Tarsus. In close proximity to Tarsus a direct and decisive battle with Darius III of Persia will take place, defeating the latter near Issus. The Persians suffered losses, while Darius III fled leaving behind a destroyed army. On this occasion, Alexander the Great captured the family of Darius (his mother, wife, Stateira, her daughters, her five year old son and Baseira, Memnon's widow.) Alexander fell in love with Alexander Baseira, and a son Heraclius was brought to life).¹⁶²

After this victory, the Persians consented defeat and sought for peace. Darius wrote a letter to Alexander the Great reminding him of the former connections with his father and "alliances." However, Alexander the Great refused. His purpose was the final victory against Persia and not peace. Soon Darius repeated his peace offer to Alexander the Great on even better conditions. This too was rejected. For Alexander, the invasion of Persia appeared as the task of his campaign, as a life ideal upon which he had been raised and hence had to march into triumphantly.¹⁶³

Expecting that Alexander the Great's military campaign would continue to Persia, it suddenly took the Syrian side towards Palestine. Alexander the Great decided to leave Persia aside for now aware of the power of its fleet and the actions it could produce in certain circumstances. So in 332 he came as far as Gaza. With Gaza taken, Alexander the Great set a most appropriate point for overseeing naval routes between east and west. In this part, Alexander the Great also faced the powerful resistance of the Arabs, being twice wounded though managing to subdue them.

As he had predicted, Alexander the Great continued his march to Egypt, an important place under Persia's conquest, whose breakup would decimate the defensive power of the Persians. Alexander the Great was aware of this fact and he wanted to appear there as a liberator, from where he would then return to Persia. His campaign had two directions: land and sea routes. Alexander the Great came to Egypt through Heliopolis. He made sacrifices at the Memphis temples. There he was given the crown of Pharaoh of Upper and Lower Egypt.¹⁶⁴

After crossing the west side of the Nile towards the north, in January 331 BC, Alexander the Great built Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast, one of the largest ancient cities, a metropolis of civilization, with the world's richest library together with the theater and other pieces of art and culture. From there, in March 331, he continued for 400 kilometers from the Paraetonium to the southwestern part through desert to the Oracle of Siwa Amaca, God

¹⁶¹ See: Kohler, U: "Die Eroberung Asiens durch Alexander den Grossen und der korinthischen Bund", Preussische Akademie 1898 dhe Lenschau, Th: "Alexander der Grosse", 1940.

¹⁶² See: Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "Aleksandri Anabasis", II, 6-11; Polybi: "Historiae", XII 17-22, Diodor: "Bibliotheca Historica", XVII, 32-35.

¹⁶³ Jacoby: "Fragmente der griechischer Historiker", II dhe Papazoglu, Fanula: "Istorija helenizma", Beograd, 1970, p. 98.

¹⁶⁴ Curtius, Rufus: "Historiae Aleksandri Magni Macedonis", 3, 12-17 dhe Droysen, Gustav Johann: "Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen", Munchen, 1954, f. 185; Fox, Robin Lane: "Alexander der Grosse", Stuttgart, 1974, p. 229.

Ammon's temple. Some ancient sources claim that there, he was welcomed by the priests as "the son of Zeus," a fact related to the Pelasgian-Illyrian affiliation, as proof of him remaining faithful to it. From there, Alexander the Great returned to Memphis continuing with his troops to Palestine.¹⁶⁵

In May 331, Alexander the Great returned to Tyros, where he began his famous incursion from Syria to the Euphrates, from where he conquered Babylon. On his way to Assyria he was cut off by the army of Darius of Persia, which had set numerous ambushes, which he was able to pass masterfully, arriving three months later to the Tigris. At the Gaugamela River, the last and decisive battle with Darius of Persia occurred, which he won by virtue of a military strategy, even though he faced the Persian army by three times greater in number. In this battle he had been able to capture Darius. But he did not. He allowed him to leave, with some of the officers who left their army behind, which was eventually destroyed.

The Battle of Gaugamela also laid the fate of Babylon. The Babylonians surrendered without a war. There he was proclaimed King of Asia. In Babylonia, Alexander the Great was fascinated by the beauty of the city. He ordered its decoration and reconstruction, appointing the Satrap Mazaeus as his representative there and leader of the city.¹⁶⁶

After five weeks in Babylon, Alexander the Great turned to the lands of Persia. The city of Susa surrendered without a war. In January 330, Macedonian forces reached the Persian capital, Persepolis, burning it down.¹⁶⁷

King Darius continued to flee from Alexander, while his cities and provinces surrendered one by one to the Macedonians. After reappointing the prefects and previous executives, Alexander the Great was honored with the highest titles. Darius's escape ended at Bactria by the Satrap Bessos, who sought to hand him over to the Macedonians in exchange for keeping hold of several border crossings with Persia. When Alexander the Great did not respond to his offer, Bessos killed Darius.

Alexander the Great took Darius's body to Persepolis and buried him with military honors.

From Persia, Alexander the Great went on towards the Caspian Lake where he took the province of Bactria and Sogdiana, the province of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and the present-day Turkmenistan. Climbing along the River Tarnak, Alexander the Great reached in April 329 the center of Afghanistan establishing the city of Alexandria in Hindu Kush (today's Charikari). Through the desert, the Macedonian army reached Turkmenistan. After capturing Marakanda (Samarkand) Alexander continued towards Syr Darya, where in May 329 he founded the city of "Alexandria Eschate" (Alexandria the Furthest), the present-day Khujand in Tajikistan. In the spring of 328, Alexander the Great returned to Sogdiana, where he founded another city named Alexandria in Amutha. After two years, Alexander the Great returns to Bactria again. There, he married Princess Roxana.¹⁶⁸

As Alexander the Great facing concerns coming from generals and other servicemen, being unhappy with the persistent wandering through Persia and the surrounding area asking to go back home, suddenly decided to march on to India where he expected to find "the top of the world". Alexander chose the march to India through the passes of Pakistan by Afghanistan and from there to Hindu Kush, a road that was too long and with great dangers. The march through the remote parts of the rivers, passing through almost inaccessible peaks, though with great

¹⁶⁵ Wielcken, U: "Alexanders Zug in die Oase Siwa", "Alexander Zug zum Ammon" and "Zur Entstehung des hellenistischen Königskultes" at "Sitzungsberichten der Preuss. Akademi", Berlin 1928,1930, 1938.

¹⁶⁶ Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "Aleksandri Anabasis", Book III, Teubner,1928, pp. 13-15, Diodor: "Bibliotheca Historica", XVIII f. 58-60; Kurcije IV, f. 15-16; Plutarh, Alexios.32-37 dhe Griffith, G.T: "Alexanders Generalship at Gaugamela", at Journal of Hell. Studies 1947, p. 77.

¹⁶⁷ See: Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "Aleksandri Anabasis", lib. III, f.18, 11-12 (sipas Ptolemeut - "Geographia"); Diodor: "Bibliotheca Historica", XVIII, f. 72; Kurcije V, f. 7; Strabon: "Geographica", XV, f.730 dhe Droysen: "Geschichte der Hellenismus", 1877; Berve: "Das Alexanderreich", II.

¹⁶⁸ Fox, Robin Lane: "Alexander der Grosse", Stuttgart, 1974, p. 229.15 and Justin: "Historiarum Philippicarum Book" XLIV, 10-13.

losses, did not stop Alexander the Great as he headed towards what he thought was India. At the beginning of year 326, through the Kabul River, he reached the Kandahar province. From there, the Macedonians penetrated into the Punjab part. Further, he went on toward the east, to the Kingdom of Magadha, which Alexander the Great wanted at all costs to conquer. But he did not succeed in reaching it because of heavy rainfall and flooding, with part of his army set to return, although their hopes ran thin. Faced with the difficult circumstances, Alexander the Great decided to return. On the banks of the Hyphasis River, he founded another city named Alexandria.¹⁶⁹

The wearisome return from Hydaspes lasted until September 325 BC. At Bukephala he started building about 800 ships to sail through the river to the Indian Ocean.¹⁷⁰

Evidently, that sailing by ship did not go as it should. On the river flow to the ocean, many ships broke down and with them a big number of Macedonian soldiers drowned. The rest of the road across the parts of India was also laborious and with losses, as the Macedonian army was being ambushed and resisted against at all sides. But the biggest cost for the Macedonian army during the return was crossing through the Gerdrozie desert (the current Baluchistan), though until then no one had managed to make it through the passage called "the way of death". Though the reasons for this adventure are unknown, Alexander the Great chose the "shortest path" to avoid any "surprise" by potential opponents, including King Semiramis. However, with his halved army, Alexander the Great reached Pura (today's Bampur) in December.

On the way back, in Susa, in January 324 BC, Alexander the Great established another Alexandria, the present-day Golashkerd. There "the greatest marriage in the world" happened, when at his order 10,000 Persian women married Macedonian soldiers. There, in the spirit of friendship between Persians and Macedonians, Alexander married two women: Stateira, Darius's daughter and Parysati. Marriages were linked according to Persian rituals. After that, the partial release of soldiers to homeland started. In Ekbatan, in 324, Alexander the Great released more than 15,000 soldiers to return. Some of them, after being married to Persian women, remained permanently in those parts.¹⁷¹

In February 323 BC, Alexander the Great returned to Babylon. There he made plans for the future battlegrounds by conquering the Arabic Peninsula and the undertaking of several exploratory expeditions, among which was the one for the Caspian Sea and the like both in India and Africa.¹⁷²

These plans remained on paper, because during a ceremony held on the occasion of commemorating his deceased friend Hefaiostos, proclaimed half-God, after a drink, he was seized with intense pain appeared exhausted, which the following day he was stricken by severe fever.¹⁷³ After days of agony, high fever, convulsions and delirium, he fell into a coma and died on 10 June 323.¹⁷⁴

The body of Alexander the Great was embalmed with honey. Although rumor has it that he was buried in Siwa's Ammonia, he was buried in Alexandria. This happened two years later. King Ptolemy the First sent him to Syria and from there to Egypt. Initially, the remains were taken to Memphis, and only after the death of Ptolemy, the body was sent to Alexandria, to be

¹⁶⁹ Bosworth, Brian Albert: "The Indian campaigns", at "Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great", pp. 159-168; Hahn, Johannes: "Alexander in Indien", Stuttgart, 2000.

¹⁷⁰ Hahn, Johannes: "Alexander in Indien", Stuttgart, 2000.

¹⁷¹ Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "Aleksandri Anabasis", Book VII, Chap. 4, pp. 4-8.

¹⁷² Shayermeyer, Fr: "Die letzten Pläne Alexander der Grossen", te Jahreshete des Österreichische Instituts", 41-1954, p. 118 and Wilcken, U: "Die letzten Pläne Alexanders der Grossen", Sitz. Ber. D. Preussen, 1937, no.24, p. 192.

¹⁷³ Although some sources claim that Alexander the Great may had been poisoned, and that this issue will be raised by his mother, six years later, when she will also punish some people "for poisoning her son" (See: Badian, E: "Journal of Hellenic Studies", 1961, p. 24 and 35), however, in "Emeferida", brought by Plutarch, based on the data of Arrianus, Flavius Lucius from the well-known work "Alexander Anabasis", book III, Alexander's death had come from fevers, which he had faced for a week. Later researchers estimate that Alexander the Great was attacked by Nile malaria fever, frequent in those parts, which had turned into an acute leukemia (See: Benston, H: "Griechische Geschichte", p. 348).

¹⁷⁴ Stoneman, Richard: "Alexander the Great". A Life in Legend", New Haven, 2008, p..6.

buried in a special grave for him. King Ptolemy IV built a great Mausoleum where he was placed in a golden sarcophagus. In the 1st century, King Ptolemy X replaced the sarcophagus with a glass one, where his body could be seen. His tomb got lost in late antiquity in a natural disaster that hit the city in the 4th century.¹⁷⁵

Alexander the Great's early death was expected to be followed by the collapse of the world's largest imperial edifice, which he erected within twelve years, while in the history of mankind he took the place of a genius conqueror, in the function of building a the new world. His great work, though originating from a cradle he inherited from his father, Philip II, and the circumstances surrounding the kingdom of Macedonia during its hegemonic erection over the antagonisms that nourished the Pelasgian-Illyrian world with that of Hellada, it would nevertheless not be so without the will for power, and above all without the vision to create a world empire of universal values, where the military strategy of conquest follows the concept of liberation and freedom in the function of building a new world.

This assumption is based on the fact that Alexander the Great appears among the most powerful military men in the history of the world and one of the most successful at the same time. His battles, in a military sense, remain among the best known not only for unremitting victories, but for the strategy used, military innovations and warfare, which consistently match the circumstances even if among the most unpredictable which the world faced in Persia and as far as India. Alexander the Great remains the only military man that never lost a battle. Hence, the epithet "Anicetos" (indestructible) carries not only a military significance, as military victories were followed with social, economic and above all political ones in the service of creating a world empire on the concept of *absolute monarchy* with the participation of different peoples of the world, first of all Macedonians, Greeks, Asians, though belonging to different cultures and traditions, hardly known to each other.

The model of absolute monarchy, due to social, economic, and cultural factors, included within an imposing political reality, is rightly attributed to the Hellenistic philosophy, for which Alexander the Great's vision of their implementation by military means is of great merit. One should keep in mind that this form of governance finds its true source in the Pelasgian-Illyrian monarchy models displayed with the Dardanian Troy, Hittite Empire, the Kingdom of Phryges (Bryges) up to the Roman Empire. Although they lacked the spatial dimension of Alexander the Great's Empire nor the asymmetric participation of autonomous governments in what they had in Persia and India, however, the Dardanian Kingdom of Troy, the Hittite, Phrygian (Bryges) and up to the Roman Empire were great empires of world proportions, for as far as they were known. And, most importantly, those empires were permeated by the idea of a free and free-spirited world whose reflection found expression in creativity, art, and philosophy with monumental works as part of a monumental civilization, the traces of which remained in Troy, Mycenae, Illyricum, and throughout the Mediterranean and Africa. Even the construction of ten of Alexandrias (cities) by Alexander the Great in various parts of the world, libraries, and theaters, was just a repeat of what he had seen in Dodona, Athens and other parts, the spirits that he wanted to restore and immortalize through major works of art and culture as an inseparable power of mankind within an organized empire built on a sustainable value system that had to remain ever more permanent and al-human concern.

Nevertheless, all-time and all-human projects, like the one on which Alexander the Great worked, may pertain to illusion, though not to eternity, as political realities are ruthless once they lack the bearers of such great ideas great ideas and concepts emerging from them.

It was impossible to save Alexander the Great's work from this historical fortune as well. Obviously, his early death gave rise to various uprisings, paving the way for a disintegration of the great world empire he had erected during his twenty-year long wars.

¹⁷⁵ Heuss, Alfred: "*Alexander der Grosse und die politische Ideologie des Altgertums*", at "Antike und Abendland" 4, 1954, p. 94.

An, considering the model of the absolute empire from the cradle of the Pelasgian ones upon which the Macedonian hegemony from Philip II to Alexander the Great rose, wrecking the decaying polis-states of the Greek cities, that considered the monarchy of "the Barbarians" (Illyrians) referred to as the greatest enemy, expectedly these thrusts against royal crowns begin in Greece, from where Alexander the Great had launched, twenty-three years earlier, his campaign eastward to set up his great kingdom. Constantly relying on the argument that the monarchies represented a political mentality of the barbarians, while the democracy of the polis-cities the highest social-political level, Athens was the first to establish in the year 322 BC a connection with several new cities to break away from the Macedonian kingdom, so to return to the model of democracy that Demosthenes and other philosophers of the time so fervently defended.

The beginning of the Lamian wars, which nevertheless ended in victory for the Macedonians, were nothing other than an effort, which in the name of "democracy" and against absolute monarchy, though it had stamped on what was taken as Hellenism, to set back the wheel of history.

However, a year later, fighting for his legacy known as the Wars of the Diadochi (Diadora = Successors) broke out. These wars (six of them) lasted for nearly thirty years ending in 281 with the dissolution of the Macedonian kingdom into three parts: the Kingdom of Ptolemy in Egypt, the Seleucid Empire in Asia and the Kingdom of Macedonia, run by the Antigonids.¹⁷⁶

The creation of the three kingdoms from the Great Empire of Alexander the Great paved the way for wars between them with Athens and Sparta also trying to get rid of the remaining Kingdom of Macedonia. In the year 267 BC the wars between Macedonia and Athens and Sparta occurred. Athens lost the war and again had to accept Macedonian garrisons in the city.

Even in circumstances of war with its allies, Macedonia at the time of Antigone II succeeded in preserving the dominant position in the Peninsula, similar to what it had at the time of Philip II. Even in the circumstances of wars with its former allies, Macedonia at the time of Antigonus II succeeded in preserving the dominant position on the Peninsula, similar to what it had at the time of Philip II. But Antigonus II and Anticholos II in the years 260-253 BC, hoping to restore something from their former power, were involved in the Syrian wars that took place between the Seleucid Kingdom and Egypt. Macedonia was involved in the Third Syrian War in 246 BC when Ptolemy III invaded the coastal towns of Thrace. Egypt will try to weaken the Kingdom of Macedonia with the help of Sparta and Athens in their occasional fighting with them. In 228 BC, the wars between Macedonia and Sparta aided by Ptolemy are known. In these bloody fighting, Macedonians defeated Sparta. On this occasion, in 217, Philip V made peace with Aetioles.¹⁷⁷

THE RETURN OF WARS WITH DARDANIANS AND THE BEGINNING OF WARS WITH THE ROMANS

In addition to the numerous wars with its allies (Athens, Sparta, and other Greek cities struggling to restore their power by exploiting the internal divisions that followed Alexander's former empire in disintegration), as well as those in the space of Syria, the Macedonians were also involved in constant wars with the Illyrians and especially with the Dardanians. They had an early rivalry, followed by the hegemonic wars of Macedonia from the fifth century BC,

¹⁷⁶ See: Arrianus, Flavi Lucius: "*Aleksandri Anabasis*", Book VI dhe Justin: "*Historiarum Philippicarum Book*" XLIV, 10-13.

¹⁷⁷ Fox, Robin Lane: "*Alexander der Grosse*", Stuttgart, 1974, p. 229.

which will continue even after the emergence of Rome in Illyricum, which evidently after the wars that lasted more than a century will determine the historical deflection of the Macedonian, Dardanian, and Illyrian kingdoms.

In this development, the Dardanian wars against Macedonia, when its ruler Demetrius II was killed, will return with increased intensity, also because of the considerable military successes against Macedonians and some Illyrian tribes, in the circumstances when it was obvious there would be no more hegemonic Macedonia, the Dardanians were openly claiming to take over its place, bringing back the issues of historical rivalry between the two kingdoms, reaching its peak even during the time of Philip II.¹⁷⁸

Although with the emergence of the Romans on the Ionian and Adriatic coasts, the circumstances had changed, meaning that any internal war was expected, the Dardanians will continue to seek further empowering to restore their former positions, they saw by defeating the Macedonians and then the Greek polices in order to move on to Asia Minor. The Dardanians counted on the help of the surrounding factors to achieve this, especially the Illyrians, who also had many open accounts to settle with the Macedonians.¹⁷⁹

But it will soon be understood that the Dardanians did not have the support of the Illyrians in the way they thought. Under the rule of Antigonus Doson, due to an agreement that the Macedonians reached with the Illyrian state, the Dardanians were expelled from the parts of Macedonia and Paeonia. It was about another Illyrian account at that time, which concerned the preservation of the equilibrium of Dardania-Macedonia in the size that it would create favors to it. In the Paeonian town, Bylazora, in the valley of the Axios River, Macedonians set up a strong military garrison in order to close the Dardanian road to Macedonia.¹⁸⁰

The Macedonian-Dardanian wars continued with the same rigor even during the time of King Philip V. As a reason was by all means Paeonia and her occupation by the Macedonians, being unacceptable for the Dardanians, as it represented a challenge for the ambitions of both parties for further power over the Illyrian tribes, and on the Greek polices, from where it could secure domination in the central and southern parts of the region, which could prevent any risk coming to them from Rome, and at the same time create the prerequisites for moving further to the East, namely Asia Minor.

With these claims, in 219, while Philip V was in the Peloponnese, Dardanians entered Paeonia and liberated parts that the Macedonian army held occupied. Titus Livius reports that "there, in the Peloponnese, Philip V met messengers who were bringing even more troubling news; he learned that the Dardanians spread over Macedonia had become possessors of Oristida, that they had descended into the Arges fields and among there were rumors among the barbarians that Philip was killed."¹⁸¹

Philip V, aware of what the presence of Dardanians in this part meant, attacked Bylazor again succeeding in driving the Dardanians away. On this occasion, he also conquered the city of Cynthia in the southwestern part of Dardania and north of Pelagonia. This situation, however,

¹⁷⁸ Droysen, J.G: "Das Dardanische Fürstentum", Leipzig, 1893, pp. 27-35.

¹⁷⁹ On the Illyrian-Roman wars see: *Titus Livy "Ab urbe codito" (Nga themelimi i qytetit)*. Livy is the most important Roman historian of the time of Augustus. He was born in Patavium (Padua) in 59 or 69 BC and died in 17 AD. Unlike many of his predecessors he did not participate in political life. All his life he remained rhetorical and literary. He wrote a history of Rome which he titled "Ab urbe codito" (From the founding of the city). His entire work consisted of 142 books. Livy's work is of great importance because it contains some data on the campaign of Alexander Molossus and Pyrrhus in Italy and the Illyrian-Roman wars. For the latter he complements in many ways what is missing or lost from Polybius.

¹⁸⁰ Livy: "Ab urbe codito", Book XXXI/28.

¹⁸¹ Idem.

did not go very far. The Dardanians, using a dispute of Philip V with South Illyria, after joining with its ruler, Europe, in the year 208 BC, attacked Macedonia and came out succeeding to send their armies as far as Orestides, a province on the southwestern border of Macedonia.¹⁸²

The successful Dardanian campaign in Macedonia made Philip V finally and with all his power to turn to Dardania in order to remove the main obstacle in his efforts to focus on the wars against the Romans, in which had already been included in several parts. Their turn would decide on the next major power of the time, though the likelihood for the Macedonians returning to their former fame were ever smaller while the Romans were more likely to thrash across of the Adriatic, as from there they could expand and strengthen for further conquests. This war began in the year 208 BC and lasted for two years.

The long war against the Macedonians on one side and that of the Romans against the Macedonians on the other, which would determine the new power factor exceeding narrow dimensions, made the Dardanians in particular and the Illyrians already involved in the wars with the Romans, generally engage in occasional volatile alliances with their opponents, from which they will have more damage than benefits. One of these alliances, in the form of an "anti-Macedonian coalition" that emerged at the time of the first Macedonian-Roman war, was between the Illyrians, Epirotes and Dardanians, at the time when there were clear signs that the Romans' victory over the Macedonians could be of a tripartite benefit for the fact that this war was not aimed at the space of the Macedonian kingdom, but rather on the Hellenic colonies on the Adriatic and Aegean, where Athens and Peloponnese maintained their commercial and economic monopoly in these parts for which the Illyrians claimed that supervision had to pass to them as they were an inseparable part of Illyria. The anti-Macedonian coalition was vast and included all the opponents of Philip V. However, evidently, it was not entirely militarily prepared for any benefit. Instead, the Macedonians, after reaching a peace deal with the Romans who were busy with fighting Hannibal and also involved in the East, signed an alliance with Atalia III of Syria, managing to expand their Aegean invasions by extending to Hellespont and taking the lands of the Eotols, and going against the Dardanians as well and to some parts of Illyria.

But as the Romans could finally defeat Hannibal in 201 and force Carthage to focus on a dictated peace, the evil hour for Philip V of Macedonia and the current Macedonian monarchy began. Because, after a while, the Romans will set the space against Macedonia from the Illyrian lands. In the autumn of the year 200 the first Roman descending legions descended to Apollonia setting their tents near the Aps River. From there, attacks on Philip's positions in Dasareti began. On this occasion, another Illyrian "covenant" is marked against Macedonia, offered by Pleurat of Illyria, Bato of Dardania and Alexander of Athamania.¹⁸³

In addition to these mutual agreements between the Illyrians and the Dardanians against the Macedonians, between the years 200 and 197, there was also an agreement between the Dardanians with Rome between the years 200 and 197. In one of them, after the Romans had achieved significant success during their campaign in Dasareti, king of the Dardanians, Bato,

¹⁸² "Historia e popullit shqiptar", First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 147.

¹⁸³ Livy: "Ab urbe condita", Book XXXI/28. ("As the war ended with this very happy expedition, many small kings and neighboring leaders of the Macedonians came to the field of the Romans; Pleurat, son of Skerdilaid, and Arynandri, king of the Athamans, and of the Dardanians Bato, son of Longar. Longar had fought against Demetrius, Philip's father. Their promises of help were answered by the consul, who said that he would use the help of the Dardanians and Pleurat when he would bring the army into Macedonia.)"

son of Longar, offered military aid to the Romans against the Macedonians, on the condition that they benefit from it, expanding to the south.

Clearly, only the Romans will benefit from these wars, while the Dardanians will remain where they were, i.e. without benefits, except in deeper hostilities with the Macedonians, who, even in the circumstances of the losses with the Romans, will succeed in gathering their forces back to fight them, as will actually happen in 199 BC, when the Dardanian armies, which were retreating through Macedonia, were attacked by the forces of Philip V. Although they did not suffer any major losses, it was clear that they would not benefit from alliances such as those with the Romans, who were interested in using the initiation of invasions to the east, which would soon follow, to divide and use at the same time both the Illyrians and Dardanians against the Macedonians and vice versa so that the opponents would be as weak as possible, while their chances for benefiting from their weakening would be as big as possible.

So it will be. In 197 BC, after the Battle of Cynoscephalae, which would end in favor of the Romans, a truce was established between Rome and Macedonia. Although the Dardanians fought alongside the Romans, they did not benefit. On the contrary, the Macedonians benefited from this peace by using it for a fierce campaign against the Dardanians. Philip V, with many forces, attacked the Dardanians and defeated them in the Battle of Stobi in Paeonia, but without succeeding in destroying them completely.¹⁸⁴

It is very likely that the Romans were also interested in this campaign, who wanted to have two weak opponents instead of a strong one, as could be the case with the Dardanians, who from a strategic point of view for Rome they appeared more dangerous, not only because they held the central part of the Illyrian Peninsula, from where they could go to the East, but also because they belonged to a common family with the Illyrians and could always join them against them even though most of them fought against each other.

The Macedonians, aware that they were dealing with a very stable enemy, which could not be defeated, while they were already involved in wars with the Romans, which, however, should have produced an epilogue of a future victor of imperial proportions, did their best so that the kingdom of Dardania would not turn into a key factor that would decide on this fate.

However, Philip V, in order to finally break the Dardanians as an important force, or, at least, to keep them in a state of constant pressure, decided to do so through the Bastami, a tribe inhabiting the Danube provinces, which were to be settled on Dardanian lands. This is best described by Titus Livius when he says that "Philip's purpose was to destroy the tribe of the Dardanians and to establish the Bastami on their lands. He (Philip) thought that this would have a double benefit, on the one hand, the disappearance of the Dardanian tribe, which had always been a dangerous enemy for Macedonia, and disturbed its kings in difficult times, and , on the other hand, would send the Bastami to Italy to devastate it after leaving their wives and children in Dardania."¹⁸⁵

According to ancient sources, the Bastami will settle in a part of the Dardanian lands, but it will be the death of Philip V that will derail his plans to dispossess or expel the Dardanians from their lands by placing them with the Bastami. Perseus, who would take the throne of Macedonia, however, would try to provoke a war between the Bastami and the Dardanians, at

¹⁸⁴ Idem.

¹⁸⁵ Tit Livii: "*Ab urbe condita*", Book XLI/19.

least to weaken them, as he was aware that if not the Dardanians, then the Romans would be the ones to be dealing with the Bastami, who, in turn, could even be used against the Macedonians.

According to Titus Livius, along with the Bastami, the Thracian and Scordian forces were stationed in the Dardanian lands, which after the death of Philip V would retreat, while the Bastamians still hoped that they could remain in the promised land where they felt good. Thus, in the winter of 176-175, the Dardanians attacked the Bastami settlements in Dardania, and after a turning point (since one part of the Dardanian army was almost defeated), they managed through the rest of their army to force the Bastami to leave Dardania.¹⁸⁶

The expulsion of the Bastamis did not remove the Macedonian threat to the Dardanians, with which they were already accustomed. Perseus, in 172, undertook another extensive campaign against the Dardanians, with an army of twenty thousand men, some of whom were from the ranks of the well-known Macedonian phalanx, led by him. Perseus scored a victory in this war, but failed to bring the Dardanian kingdom to its knees.

It happened, however, that at this time, the Dardanian Kingdom again recovered thanks to two important actions. The first concerned the strengthening of friendship, albeit temporary, with the Illyrians (the marriage of Teuta, the daughter of King Monun, with Gentius), which was accompanied by an alliance, also temporary, for joint military action against Macedonia. The second action had to do with the conclusion of another alliance with the Romans, as Gentius would sever alliances with Rome to turn to the Macedonians, which eventually led to their departure and their rapprochement with the latter. The Dardanians, in order to protect themselves from the Macedonian threat, which endangered them more than ever, decided to seek help from the Romans, through a new tie.

The second and last connection of the Dardanians with the Romans and that of the Illyrian Kingdom of Gentius with the Macedonians, after having severed the almost vassal connection with Rome, will mark the last beginning of the Macedonians and at the same time of the Kingdom of Gentius.

Even in these circumstances of bilateral alliances on one side of the Dardanians with the Romans and on the other side of the Illyrian one with the Macedonians (King Gentius with King Perseus), Rome sought to somehow separate Gentius from Perseus, so as not to be opposed by two kingdoms, which could cause him trouble. It did not succeed, as the Illyrians believed that Rome's victory over Hannibal had not strengthened its position in the region. On the contrary, both in the East and Asia there was enough discourse that the Romans to cut off their movement towards the Illyricum, in the war against the Illyrians and the Macedonians that would help them. This led the Roman senate to send the first forces to Illyria in November 172 BC. A number of forces were also sent to Greece. Once properly positioned in Thessaly, in the spring of 171, Rome decided to begin its final war against Perseus, as it was strategically important.

This war, which lasted for over five years, brought Gentius and Perseus of Macedonia even closer. In January 168 they also forged an anti-Roman alliance. However, the end of Macedonia came during the third war against Rome in 168 when Perseus tried to regain the former power of Macedonia.

In fact, the anti-Roman alliance, the last for them, was fatal for Gentius and the Illyrian kingdom, as the Illyrian kingdom entered the war against Rome. This prompted Rome to launch

¹⁸⁶ Idem, Book XLI/19.

a powerful campaign to attack the Illyrians and directly subdue the southern Illyrian province, thereby destroying the Illyrian kingdom. The Roman military leader, Lucius Anicius Gallus, at the head of 30,000 soldiers, set out in the direction of fortified Shkodra, the capital of the Illyrian state, where the king had taken refuge.¹⁸⁷

Losing the war against Rome, this time, was different from that which had been suffered during the time of Teuta, or later, when the losers, by means of peace agreements, were subject to the terms of Rome, which, as usual, enjoyed heavy tributes, such as was the case with Teuta, or with vassals with Pleurates and Demeter Faros. Rome had now decided to put an end to the Illyrian Kingdom, the Macedonian Kingdom, and other similar creatures across the sea, in order to finally establish its hegemony in the region and other parts of the East. Thus, after the end of the war, Rome dealt with the administrative division of the lands of the defeated kingdoms. This measure was preceded a decision by the Roman Senate to declare the Illyrians and Macedonians “free”.

In Shkodra, in 167 BC, the commander of the Roman army, Lucius Anicius, in the presence of five special envoys of Rome and the first pro-Roman Illyrian representatives, announced the decision of the Roman Senate, in which case the Illyrian lands were divided into three separate administrative units.¹⁸⁸

The first province, centered in Lissius, included the lands around the city up to the river Mat. The second administrative unit consisted of the province inhabited by the Labiates, whose center was Shkodra. Meanwhile, the third province included the Illyrian coastal areas north of Shkodra and the Naron River, including the towns of Rizon and Olcin (Ulqin).¹⁸⁹

The same was done in Macedonia, which was declared a province of Rome, under the supervision of the Senate.

Actually, years later, in 149-148, under Andronicus, there was also a Macedonian uprising against the Roman invaders, which led to the Fourth War, but with Andronicus' assassination in 146, the Macedonian kingdom ceased to exist.

At the historical end of the kingdom of Macedonia, it can be said that the kingdom of Dardania also had a hand, which, in order to maintain its power in this part, had an alliance with Rome. But, clearly, the fall of the Macedonian kingdom did not strengthen the position of either the Dardanians or the Illyrians. On the contrary, the Roman triumph in Macedonia also marked the end of the Dardanian ties with the Romans.

CHAPTER TWO

ILLYRICUM AND ROME

¹⁸⁷ Stipčević, Aleksandër: “Ilirët”, Prishtinë, 1980, p. 60.

¹⁸⁸ Idem.

¹⁸⁹ Idem.

ROMAN CONQUESTS AND ILLYRIAN UPRISINGS

The overthrow of the Illyrian Kingdom of Gentius and the inclusion of the Illyrian territories under the new imperial administration according to the model of autonomy (*civitate*) did not complete the process of Roman conquests under the scenario of complete subjugation of Illyria, Macedonia and Greece under its rule. With the collapse of the Illyrian Kingdom of Gentius and the Macedonian Kingdom, much of what was supposed to be the end of the Roman triumph over the sea had been achieved, but not their eventual victory. Because, the Dardanian Kingdom and the Federation of Dalmatians remained, which appeared independent and with a strong power, which would turn into a major obstacle for Rome.

Of course, in this Roman strategy, the Dardanians had a special place for many reasons, which, however, those of a strategic nature deserve to be mentioned because on their side again the great importance of the Dardanians and Dardania as a long-standing power stands out, from Troy onwards, connecting Central Europe with Asia Minor, as does the possibility of taking over a broad anti-Roman resistance front, which would include the Epirotic and Macedonian factor, ethnically interrelated. The latter, in the new circumstances could be found on the same side.

Aware of these issues, the Romans took all measures to initially keep the Dardanians and Dardania separated from the Epirotan and Macedonian part in the south and east, creating a Roman circle, as they would do their best to separate them from any connection with other parts of the Illyrian remnants outside the occupation in the western part (Dalmatians, Ardians, Plereies and others), that as detached, to be subject to new circumstances, i.e. to accept the role of the “privileged” vassal, as it had happened to the Labeates, the Japodes, the Daors, and some others, rather than to be conquered by war.

The strategy of holding the Dardanians apart for a long time would certainly be useless and harmful, even if they were not given the opportunity to have allies or collaborators on the possible anti-Roman front. Therefore, it was only natural that the Romans would continue to settle accounts in Northern Illyria with the Illyrian “remnants”: the Dalmatians, but also the Ardians, the Plereies, the Japodes, and other related or detached tribes, so that the part to the west of Dardania would turn into “pure” Roman space.

In fact, Dalmatians in northern Illyria emerged as an important political power in the second century BC. Their lands were located in the inland province south of the Dinaric Alps, where their headquarters were located in Delminion Castle.¹⁹⁰ Here they formed a powerful federation, stretching out in the direction of the Adriatic coast, with its lands reaching the river Tilor, in the neighborhood of the Liburnians. To the south they stretched from the river Tilor (Cetina) and the lower reaches of the Narona (Neretva), to the southern shores, where the Daorsi lived.¹⁹¹ In the east, the power of the Dalmatians extended to the lands of the Desidians in Bosnia. Ancient sources say that the Dalmatians also appeared as a coastal power, which in addition to the Salona pier had other cities.¹⁹²

The Dalmatian Federation, during the time of Pleurates, was for a time dependent on the Illyrian state. After the arrival of Gentius at the head of the Illyrian state, in 181 BC, they again became independent. The time from the secession from Gentius to its final fall in 168 BC, when they would have a space of action, the Dalmatians used it to further strengthen, to the detriment of the interests of Rome, which wanted to see both the planned vassals and the “independent kings” as harmless and dependent as possible. Thus, after the conquest of the

¹⁹⁰ Idem, p.154.

¹⁹¹ Idem, p. 154.

¹⁹² Strabo: “*Geographica*” (Gjeografia), Book VII/3, 4, 7,8.

Illyrian state, the Dalmatians and their federation were targeted by Rome, as Roman plans for the conquest of the northern part necessarily passed through Illyrian lands from the Adriatic, Dalmatia to the Danube (Pannonia) to the Alps.

As in the case of Teuta and later Gentius, Rome began to look for reasons for war in the Dalmatians' behavior towards the inhabitants of Issa, who complained that their lands were being violated as well as their cities of Epet and Tragyr. There was even talk of similar complaints by the Daorsi, which is why they will be denounced by Gaius Fannius, who before the Senate reported that the Dalmatians not only did not want to correct the mistakes against those who complained and constantly suffered from them, but they didn't even want to hear it, saying they had nothing to do with Rome.¹⁹³

What is hidden behind the "complaints" of the Roman delegate before the Senate, Polybius explains very well when he says: "By launching a campaign against the Dalmatians, on the one hand, they would incite and raise the fighting spirit of their people and, on the other hand, they would teach the Illyrians a lesson and force them to submit to the rule of Rome. For this reason the Romans declared war on the Dalmatians, but before other peoples made it look as if they were doing so because of the Dalmatians' bad behavior towards their representatives."¹⁹⁴

Thus, Rome remained faithful to the path it begun with Teuta, as a cause had to be created, so that the reckoning seemed to be limited, that is, as a defense of one's own interests, with the aim of keeping other Illyrian factors in check.

With the step by step war strategy with the Illyrians, the Romans also attacked the Dalmatians. As expected, the "trigger" was sought in their ongoing campaigns to cut off Roman legions' access to the central and eastern parts. After two or three "notes" followed by several debates in the Roman senate, in 156 BC, the military campaign against the Dalmatians began, although it went as planned, neither at the beginning nor later. It is known that the Roman consul, Gaius Marcus Figules, during that attempt, did not manage to enter the Dalmatian areas. Even during the first encounter with them, there were great losses that forced him to return from where he had started. But that did not stop the Romans, who knew they could not go on without removing the powerful Dalmatians. Thus, the Roman army will return, but with another more prepared consul. It was Cornelius Scipio Nasica who attacked from many directions. After many bloody battles and heavy losses, Nasica managed to enter Delminium, which he would destroy, though unable to "pacify" the whole country as planned, as they remained independent parts, where the Romans did not manage to enter.

That didn't stop Cornelius Nasica from going any further. Numerous Roman battalions, on their way to the center and east, no longer stopped regardless of losses. So after the Dalmatians, whose main cities and the largest living space would be destroyed, the Romans, in turn, attacked the northern Illyrian lands, those of the Japodes and the Pannonians.

In addition to the northern lands, in the second half of the 2nd century BC, the Romans also dealt with the *Ardians*, one of the powerful Illyrian peoples, who lay on the shores of the Middle Adriatic, near Lake Shkodra. The Ardians, who after 168 had entered one of the provinces created by the Roman state, realizing they could remain independent, and that this would probably be accepted by Rome (after a mutual agreement in the form of a long-term peace, where no trouble would be brought to them to the East), changed their attitude towards Rome and declared independence.

"Reasons" to attack the Ardians, Rome found "in their obedience", which in their lands sent military legions, which, reportedly only after several years of fighting, in 135, managed to force them to lower their weapons.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Polybius: "*Historiae*" (Histories), Book XXXII/9

¹⁹⁴ Polybius: "*Historiae*" (Historitë), Book XXXII/13.

¹⁹⁵ Tit Livi: "*Ab urbe condita*" (From Rome foundation), Book XLV/43

To avoid a new uprising, Rome forcibly displaced the Ardians from the coast to the mountainous interior of present-day Herzegovina.¹⁹⁶ It was part of a strategy that Rome pursued with several other tribes in the central and eastern parts.

But, clearly, Rome will still have to deal with the Dalmatians, the Japodes, the Liburnians, and others, who will not agree to submission, although these will be often fierce battles to be fought, which will take up a lot of time and energy, as a good part of the legions will be forced to keep them connected to these parts.

Before returning to them for the second time, especially to the invincible and rebellious Dalmatians, Rome had to remove the Dardanian affair from the agenda, which had to do with the kingdom of Dardania, a very important fortress of the Peninsula, connecting the eastern parts with the western ones, from where the rivers flowing into the Aegean, the Adriatic, and the Black Sea were supervised. With their geographical position, the Dardanians always held the key to the connection of the West and East.

In contrast to the wars with the Illyrian and Macedonian coastal countries, where Rome could undertake expeditions from time to time by sea, or by means of their legions stationed in coastal cities, where their supply and replenishment was easier and more rapid, the war with the Dardanians, in addition to the apparent military power, required other preconditions for the operation of this machine. And one of them was the confrontation of the great defensive ability of the Dardanians in the continental circumstances, which did not suit the Romans, who were not accustomed to such environments.

After the fall of the Illyrian Kingdom of Gentius (168) and the campaigns undertaken in the North against other Illyrian tribes, Rome did not make any significant military action against the Dardanians, although it held several legions in the occupied parts of Macedonia and nearby Greece. But with the “quiet” legions, Rome put pressure on them not to take any action that went against Roman interests.

At this time, the Dardanians, although they will not show any marked interest in any open conflict with the Romans, however, will not stand idly by. The Roman garrisons in Paeonia will occasionally be disturbed by the fighting, undertaking expeditions to Astibos and Erigon, as well as to the West towards the lands of the Autariates to the North the lands of the Skordians, with whom the Dardanians had some accounts of open weather.¹⁹⁷

Faced with constant “provocations”, after waging numerous campaigns against the Dalmatians, Japodes, and others, the Romans finally decided to turn to the Dardanians before it was too late. The resistance of the northern Illyrian tribes in Dalmatia and Pannonia warned that the Dardanians could turn into an important center of anti-Roman movement, which would have unforeseen consequences for them and their plans to subjugate the entire Illyrian region. This danger became even greater as the Dardanians had already begun to connect with their eastern neighbors, the Medes (a large Thracian tribe), who also held important positions in the eastern part of the peninsula. Thus, during the years 97 and 85 BC, Rome undertook several military expeditions to Dardania and Medes, but failed.

Both Dardanians and Medes appeared together in several battles and reaped victories over the Roman legions, which were retreating to Macedonia and the occupied parts of Illyria.¹⁹⁸ In the summer of 84 BC, the Dardanians, without the help of the Medes, furiously attacked the Roman province of Macedonia and reached Delphi.¹⁹⁹

The victory of the Dardanians greatly disturbed Rome also due to the fact that they, along with the Medes and other Thracians, had already begun to turn into a powerful shield which

¹⁹⁶ Polybius: “Historie”, II, pp. 9-12.

¹⁹⁷ Droysen, J. G.: “*Das dardanische Fürstentum*”, Kleine Schriften zur alten Geschichte Bd. I, Leipzig 1893, pp. 87-94.

¹⁹⁸ Idem.

¹⁹⁹ Idem.

not only thwarted their plans to expand further north and east, but also to keep what they had put under submission. Therefore, it was expected that they would return to work on a large-scale military campaign. In 76 BC, Gaius Scribonius Curio was sent to Macedonia at the head of five new legions to begin the war against the Dardanians, joining those already deployed there. The ancient authors state how frightened the Roman military were when they lined up for war when an entire legion near Durrach rebelled to avoid this war.²⁰⁰

Despite this, Gaius Curio, attacked Dardania from three directions, and after long and extremely fierce fighting, with heavy losses for the Romans, managed to enter Dardania. Although he did not penetrate the whole country, however, going along the Ibar and Morava rivers, he reached the Danube and later celebrated his triumph in Rome.²⁰¹

The triumph, whether partial against the Dardanians and Dardania was extremely important to Rome, because the Dardanian Kingdom would bring it almost before disintegration, as the roads to the Danube had already been opened from where further penetrations could be made to the eastern parts through the estuaries of the rivers Vardar, Iber, and Morava towards Greece and Macedonia, which it invaded by north-east, i.e. directly to Thrace and further in the target areas.

Although the Dardanians would continue to resist, they no longer oversaw the main connecting routes to the north, which Rome had in its hands from where it began to create new administrative areas in accordance with its concept, as it had done in the occupied Illyrian lands, in Macedonia and Hellada.

To complete the project of exiting to the Danube and Pannonia from the west, from the depths of the Adriatic coast, it needed a complete subjugation of the Dalmatians and other Illyrian tribes, who continued to remain isolated or under supervised autonomy, which however were not certain. Both the Dardanians in the central part of Illyricum and the Dalmatians in the coastal part and the one leading to the Danube and Pannonia, with their vast, strategic expanse, were the main obstacle to further Roman conquests. Although they had taken some bloody lectures, such as those of 135-130 BC, they nevertheless continued to make persistent obstacles in these parts. This is best confirmed by the Roman sources, which state that even after a century of bloody confrontation with the Dalmatians and the occasional punishments that would be inflicted on them, they continued to raise their weapons against them. They will even be able to inflict significant losses on the Roman army, as they did in the 1950s when the forces led by Caesar's consul, Aurelius Gabinius, broke up near the town of Synodium, and he fled wounded to Solana. The same fate will befall Senator Balbus (44 BC) after attacking the Dalmatian territories with four cohorts but suffering complete defeat and falling in the front. On this occasion, it is known that the Dalmatians took Salona and some other parts that had been lost before.²⁰²

Only after confronting the concerns brought about by the assassination of Julius Caesar would Rome succeed in re-conquering some of the Dalmatian cities they had recaptured in the 1940s. Octavian and Antony, in 39, sent large military units against the Dalmatians led by the poet Asinus Polionius, who, although unable to subdue the Dalmatians altogether, he nevertheless built the first public library in Rome from the loot he had taken there.²⁰³

Nor was this the end, as trumpeted in the imperial capital. It took four years for the numerous legions of the Roman army to be led by Octavian himself, who had become the sole ruler of the Roman state. The army he took with him consisted of 10 legions (1/5 of the Roman general army) and, in advance, attacked the lands of the Japodes in the north, where it became known that one after the other the following centers fell into their hands: Monetium,

²⁰⁰ See: Frontini "*Stratagemā*", cit. According to "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", Volume Two, Tiranë, 2002, p. 152.

²⁰¹ Appiani: "*Illyrika*", 6-8.

²⁰² Stipçeviq, Aleksandër: "*Ilirët*", Prishtinë, 1980, p. 65.

²⁰³ Idem, p. 66.

Avendo, Arupium and Terponus do reach as far as Metuli, where the center of Japodes was seated. Octavian was also wounded there, though the Romans managed to conquer it and thereby break their resistance.²⁰⁴ The Japodes were powerless to do more in the face of the Roman army.

When he reached Siscinis and conquered this city using it as a fine base to attack the Dacians and Pannonians, Octavian, convinced that the campaign would go well, returned to Rome. He left behind Phuphus Geminis, though after a few weeks Octavian had to return to Illyria, after which the uprising against the Romans broke out. The emperor saw it fit to continue the campaign against the Dalmatians, who were the main instigators of the anti-Roman resistance, which threatened to turn into a broad front that would include other peoples beyond the Danube, which already had accepted submission.²⁰⁵

This time, although he started well by conquering Promona, when he forced Versius to surrender and leave the city, the emperor was not given the opportunity for a final battle, as he saw it. The Dalmatians, led by military leader Testimotis, decided to wage guerrilla warfare, that is, outside a frontal confrontation, as had happened before. They began to attack in small groups and in surprise. This lasted for almost seven years, but the Romans decided not to return without subjugating the Dalmatians, or at least to take control of all the strategic crossings to the Danube and Drina, which provided them with oversight.

With a lot of patience and loss, Octavian conquered the Dalmatian cities of Synodium and Andetrium, and then managed to take the city of Setovis, where the main power of the Dalmatians was concentrated. It is known that there, Octavian was wounded again, being almost forced to withdraw, but returned and put an impassable siege on the city of Dalmatia, which faced hunger, disease and many other hardships. This led to the Dalmatians surrendering. This was the end of Dalmatian independence and the end of Illyrian independence in general.²⁰⁶

Octavian's bloody campaign in Illyria eventually toppled all Illyrian state and tribal remaining structures, but not the Illyrian will to oppose, as reflected in numerous uprisings and stubbornness, the most powerful of which were those of the years 6-9 AD.

These uprisings and some similar ones that will continue even later were not intended to restore the Illyrian state and their kingdoms, which lay in different places. They, in the first place, opposed Rome's policy of further wars, which had already begun in the north against the German Marcomanni, who had established a powerful tribal federation in the lands of present-day Czech Republic.²⁰⁷

On this occasion Rome had envisioned a large army of 12 legions, which would be supplemented by auxiliary units, which would be recruited mainly to the large northern tribes: Dalmatians, Desidates, Pannonians, and others. Since these recruitments were made by force, it was expected that they would receive the same response. Thus, the first to react were the Desidians, who enjoyed some tribal independence. Their leader, Bato, thanks to the rapid success he reaped against the Romans, restored the hopes of other tribes that something more could be done, at least not to get involved in Rome's warlike campaigns in the north, which were at a loss. big. So the Breuces quickly joined him with their king Pinnes and the military leader also called Bato. The two Batos will soon turn into central personalities of this glorious

²⁰⁴ Stipčević, Aleksandër: "Ilirët", Prishtinë, 1980, p. 66.

²⁰⁵ For more on Octavian's expedition in Illyria see: Johannes Kromayer: "Kleine Forschungen zur Geschichte des Zweiten Triumvirats. V. Die Illyrische Feldzüge Octavians 33 und 34-33 v. Chr." "Hermes", 33-1989; Georg Veith: "Die Feldzüge des C. Julius Caesar Octavianus in Illyrien in den Jahren 35-33 v. Chr.", Wien, 1914; Erih Swoboda: "Octavian und Illyricum", Wien, 1932; Roland Syma: "Augustus and the South Slavlands" (Revue internationale des études balkaniques, 3/1937-1938, pp. 33-46; Frantz Miltner: "Augustus' Kampf um die Donauzugrenze", 1937; N. Vulić: "Oktavijanov Ilirski rat i izgnanje Skordiska iz Gornje Mizije", Beograd, 1926.

²⁰⁶ Stipčević, Aleksandër: "Ilirët", Prishtinë, 1980, p. 66.

²⁰⁷ Frommer, Hansjör: "Die Illyrer. 4000 Jahre europäischer Geschichte", Karlsruhe, 1988.

uprising, in which a large number of Illyrian tribes for the first time in their history united against a common enemy.²⁰⁸

The two Batos took different directions that of the Breuces in the direction of Sirminium (Srem Mitrovica), while that of the Desidiates in the direction of Solana. The first was defeated, while the second was wounded and could not take Solana, but continued south, reaching Apollonia in central Illyria.²⁰⁹

The Illyrian uprising caused great concern in Rome, as there was talk of large-scale uprisings involving 800,000 insurgents, with 200,000 fighters and 9,000 cavalry.²¹⁰

Clearly, Emperor Augustus, faced with the danger of this army leaving for the Italian territory, ordered Tiberius to immediately make peace with the Marcomanni and the Quadi with whom he had until then fought, in order to leave for Illyricum with his army. Another powerful military man, Germanicus, was sent to his aid, which meant that all forces from all directions had to be used against the Illyrian insurgents. The decisive battle took place on the Bathius River (in all likelihood present-day Bosnia), in which the Bato of the Breuces suffered heavy defeat. It is said that the king of the Breuces, Pinnes, wanted the war against the Romans to continue, but the Bato soldier did not think so. He proposed surrender, which was followed by his soldiers. King Pinnes also surrendered to the Romans, and the Romans recognized Bato as the leader of the Breuces in gratitude.²¹¹

The surrender of one Bato was not approved by the other, the Bato of the Desidiates. So he turned to his comrade-in-arms, arrested him, and sentenced him to death. This action, however, did not help him return the Breuces to himself, so he was forced to return to Dalmatia to continue the war against the Romans.²¹²

Bato achieved successes in Dalmatia, crowned with the return of the cities of Splodum, Sertium and several others, but was quickly confronted by two powerful Roman commanders: Germanicus and Tiberius, where he at Raetinium (present-day Golubic near Bihac) in Bosnia), suffered heavy defeat. Bato managed to escape and fortify himself in Andetrium (a place near today's Split in Dalmatia), but he left there for the city of Arduba, where he was finally defeated.²¹³

After this defeat, the Roman armies acted with extraordinary severity towards the Illyrian population. Those who failed to hide in the mountains were terribly massacred. In some parts, in order not to fall into the hands of the Romans, Illyrian women were thrown into abysses.²¹⁴

Rome had decided to make the Illyrian lands desolate, so that there would be no more troubles and revolts, which would hinder further conquests, as was the case with other penetrations to the German lands, even though there, after losing the war in the Toutoburg Forest, he will be forced to stop.

The last resistance of the Desidiates' Bato, though powerful, nevertheless could not turn the wheel of history backwards, nor change anything in the concept of Rome to go further.

²⁰⁸ Stipčević, Aleksandër: *"Ilirët"*, Prishtinë, 1980, p. 68.

²⁰⁹ Idem.

²¹⁰ More about the scale of these wars see: Otto Hirschfeld: *"Zur geschichte des pannonisch-dalmatischen Krieges"* (Hermes), 25/1890, faqe 351-362; Adolf Bauer: *"Zum dalmatinisch-pannonischen Krieg 6-9 n.Chr."*, (Archeaologjische-epigraphische Mittelhilfungen aus Österreich), 17/1894, pp. 153-148; Nikola Vulić: *"Dalmatski-panonski ustanak"*, Glas Srpske kraljevske akademije, Book 121, 1926, pp. 55-72; Reinhold Rau: *"Zur Geschichte des pannonisch-dalmatischen Krieges der Jahre 6-9"*, Chr. Klio, 19/1925, pp. 313-364; Erich Köstermann: *"Der pannonisch-dalmatische Krieg 6-9 n. Chr."*, (Hermes), 81/1953, H. 3, pp. 345-378; Tibor Nagy: *"Der Aufstand der pannonisch-dalmatinischen Völker und die Frage der Zweitailing Illyricums"*.

²¹¹ Stipčević, Aleksandër: *"Ilirët"*, Prishtinë, 1980, p. 69.

²¹² Idem, p. 69.

²¹³ For more about the recent Illyrian war against the Romans see: Nikola Vulić: *"Oktavianov liriski rat 35-33 i 6-9"*, Beograd, 1961, Stefan Josipović: *"Oktavijanovo ratovanje u Iliriku"*, Zagreb, 1965; Walter Schmithenner: *"Octavians militärische Unternehmungen in Jahren 35-33 v. Ch."*, Wiesbaden, 1958.

²¹⁴ More about the savage repressions that the Roman army committed in the Illyrian lands (Dalmatia) see Straboni: *"Geographica"* (Gjeografia), Book VII/ 3-6.

Its only success, if it can be said so, was that it strengthened the Romans' belief that the Illyrian population should use its strategy of appropriation and involvement in imperial structures, from the army to the administration, turning into its supporter, of course after being convinced that by means of self-government and other forms of preservation of its autonomous social structures, it became part of the common imperial concept.

MACEDONIANS, DARDANIANS AND ILLYRIANS DURING THE ROMAN EMPIRE

With the suppression of the last Dalmatian uprising at the beginning of the new millennium, one era ends and another begins in the history of the Illyrians and Dardanians as the main peoples of the common trunk of Pelasgian root, who will continue to maintain their presence on the historic stage, not any more as kings in their own kingdoms. Involved in the Roman Empire they will share the fate of this empire. Not infrequently, even in its territory, important events will take place for Rome, where they will have a decisive role for its development and protection.²¹⁵

Clearly, there will be other opportunities for a common social and political union, which they had not had before. Under the umbrella of an empire that had overthrown their kingdoms, their great power began to rise also by appropriating the Roman Empire from within, a natural process that can be said to date back to the second half of the second century AD and on. This will highlight the self-governing and spiritual (religious) identity of Illyricum, which can also be taken as a special administrative identity. They will become a key factor in the Roman Empire, on which it and its entire edifice would rely when the Western spirit it carried relied on the concept of world universalism.

Before talking more about this not-so-common historical development, when the conqueror turns into an "invader" from within with whom he will be fully identified, as will actually happen from the time of the emperor of Illyrian descent Diocletian. Hence, Rome, which had just conquered some of the Illyrian lands, such as those from 168 BC, when King Gentius was defeated, persevered to bring the conquered parts under its administration, as it had done with Macedonia, first by linking them to independent autonomous units (*civitate*), and later by dividing them into separate administrative parts of self-government. ... It even imposed administrative neutrality and other forms of government similar to those of the Roman Empire on countries that would for some time recognize "neutrality", or those it would ignore by treating them as "allies" in order to help them get involved in the space it saw under its influence or involved in the imperial part, which would be rounded off even by military conquests.

Thus, from the second half of the second century, that is, from the time of the first Roman incursions into the Illyrian lands along the Adriatic, we know certain forms of Roman civil and military administration in these parts. But the complete suppression of Illyrian and Dardanian resistance throughout their territory, as well as the Roman incursions into northern Germany and the East to Thrace and beyond to Asia Minor and the Near and Middle East, required a new administrative and state organization, which would enable a general social, political and military supervision over the space stretching across three continents. Under these circumstances, the Roman slave-owning state faced the great challenge of internal strengthening, which was not possible without the involvement of the many peoples it had

²¹⁵ Stipčević, Aleksandër: "Ilirët", Prishtinë, 1980, p. 68.

conquered and without economic development, to become part of a new civilization with imperial claims, in which property, power and the possibility of prosperity in all fields appeared as a new opportunity for the ruling aristocracy of the country with the representatives of the peoples included in the Empire, especially those of Illyricum, had to find a place.

Notably, from the very beginning, the Roman state, in the occupied parts of Macedonia, Illyria and Dardania, began to implement agrarian reforms, which began with the confiscation of the best fertile lands, which were declared “*ager publicus*”.²¹⁶

Of course, this reform, which aimed to unite large land holdings in the possession of the state, was in fact based on favoring Roman citizens, mostly Italian settlers and army veterans, who lived in the suburbs of cities or in special settlements.

Despite Rome’s intentions to influence agrarian policy to change the population structure in some parts in favor of what was called Roman citizenship, the so-called “*ager publicus*” also benefited locals, as large agricultural economies were established, called *latifundia*. They were located near major roads and cities, from where they were supplied with agricultural products.

It is noteworthy that the *latifundia* did not affect much the interior of the country, while further, in accordance with the agreements that the central government of Rome had with the local tribes and the units that were granted the status of autonomy, the land was owned by tribal communities or villagers, who were governed in accordance with their interests, where, however, the main say was given to the leaders of the feudal lords, who were natives.

With the changing circumstances, that is, when the roads connecting them with other parts began to be traversed through the occupied territories, which also broke a certain closure, notably the acceptance of the new way of possessing and treating the agricultural property, which will issue local *latifundists*, who will be included in the general system is clearly seen. Thus, from Roman sources it is obvious that such large *latifundes* appear in the vicinity of Ulpiana, Scupi and in many other parts of Dardania, where the first patricians from the ranks of the slave-owning principality such as Pomponius Atticus and the Ture family are known in Dardania and many similar others.²¹⁷

Before moving on to the social, economic, and political factors that produced the new circumstances emerging during and after the Roman conquests from the middle of the second century BC to the beginning of the first century AD, that is, with the conclusion of the process of subjugation of the Macedonians, Illyrians and Dardanians by the Romans, but also of the other peoples around, it is appropriate to reflect their administrative body within the Roman Empire, with which during the next four centuries will share the fate turning even into supporters and ultimately its main defenders. This will happen because a step has been taken as the empire seems to have returned to their social interest to the extent of identifying with it, which must have been protected from the challenges that will come from the north by the penetrations of barbarians (Slavs, Avars and others), whose aim was to destroy the overall civilization of antiquity on the foundations of which stood precisely their Pelasgian ancestors, on which the entire Hellenism would be built.

On this occasion, before this awareness took shape, lasting for about five centuries, it should be reminded that the Macedonian and Illyrian-Dardanian space, which became part of the Roman Empire after the long wars, went through an organizational form, which started from the end of the 1st century BC to the 2nd century AD, in which case the province of Illyricum (*Iliricum*) was created. It included the provinces of Northern Illyria. The province of Illyricum covered a very large territory: in the North it reached the Danube, and in the South

²¹⁶ See: Schmit, Rüdiger: “*Illyrier*”, Mainz, 1968.

²¹⁷ Fromer, Hansjörgen: “*Die Illyer. 4000 Jahre europäischer Geschichte*”, Karlruhe, 1988 and “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 162.

it reached the Mat River; to the east the province of Illyricum stretched as far as the Bosphorus.²¹⁸

The end of the invasions, which followed from the beginning of the first century BC, as well as the need to take into account the ethnic, economic, and also other realities in the new spaces, which in some way preserved their known characteristics, such as even in the circumstances of the kingdoms and states of Illyria and that of Dardania, posed the need for a new administrative division. On this occasion, it is noteworthy that Rome created the province of Moesia, which included Dardania with all its space. After a while, it came out with a status as a separate province, which Dardania had all the time, enjoying special treatment, being related not only to the development and stability of the Roman Empire in this part, but also the protection from barbaric attacks from the North (Avarian and Slavic), where they will play a special role, as they will have in the case of the creation of Byzantium.

A little later, especially after the wars of the years 6-9, which were very fierce and caused the province of Illyricum, for strategic reasons, to be easier supervised, but also to create separate ethnic realities, to be divided into two: in the north the province of Pannonia was created, while in the south that of Dalmatia. In addition, the province of Epirus was created, which included the Illyrian provinces south of the Vjosa, all of Epirus, and Acarnania and Aetolia, south of it.²¹⁹

The subjugated and peaceful provinces were supervised by the Roman Senate, and the provinces of strategic importance, where the situation was precarious and where military units were needed, depended directly on the empire. Later, this concept would affect the pyramid of leadership and that of imperial administration, with that of the center run by Rome would pass to the provinces, which appeared as states in states, as was the case with Dardania and some others of Illyria, from which the military of local origin, supported precisely by this local force, will rise to an imperial post. With this, its *de facto* power came from the “periphery” and the once subjugated peoples had become ruling peoples, whose behavior would depend on its fate, a fact that justifies the overcoming that the Illyrians from the conquered turned into “conquerors” within the Empire. But initially in Illyria the imperial provinces were Pannonia, Dalmatia, Epirus, while Macedonia depended on the Senate.²²⁰

At the head of the provinces stood special rulers, the viceroys, who according to the importance of the provinces were of different ranks. Thus, in the province of Dalmatia the supervisor was in the rank of consul (*legatus, Augustipropraetore*). The province of Epirus belonged to the group of second-hand provinces and was ruled by viceroys from the Roman cavalry. At the head of the Macedonian province were senators in the rank of *properator*.²²¹

The deputies were appointed to the administration of the province for one year. They also held high office in the judiciary and fiscal policy. In the provinces where military units were held, they also had military power in their hands. They had *questors* who dealt with finance, and there were *procurors* who did important work in the military and courts.

In time, this administrative, judicial and military structure, coming mainly from the “center”, will gradually be supplemented with locals, to reach the level when they, in some parts, will be the only representatives, with the entire administrative, judicial, and military system falling into their hands, which, however, was conditional on the locals gaining the status of Roman citizenship, as would actually happen in 212 AD, when Emperor Caracalla proclaimed an edict for this.

It is worth noting that the Roman Empire also had a well-built tax collection system, so that they flowed as quickly as possible into the state coffers. The main tax was on land and

²¹⁸ Lăcej, Naim: “Tanagra”, Lezhë 2012, pp. 38-48.

²¹⁹ Idem.

²²⁰ See Ylli, M: “Iliria dhe Epiri”, Tiranë 2007.

²²¹ See Niebur, G. B: “The Roman History”, London 1827.

breath (*tributum soli* and *tributum capital*). At first these taxes were paid only by the “*pelegrini*” (foreigners), as the Romans called the natives, but later they were extended to the Roman citizens settled in the Illyrian and Dardanian provinces. Another source was customs or border tax, paid for some imported goods passing through land, river or sea routes from one administrative-customs unit to another. Illyricum was a separate customs unit (*portorium Illyrici*), which included the provinces of Dalmatia, Pannonia, Moesia, Noricum, and later the province of Dacia.²²²

The Roman Empire did not collect all the taxes for itself. Some of them were left to the provinces to be administered according to their own needs, in the first place, to improve the internal infrastructure. This had greatly increased the concentration so that they could be harvested as best as possible, as this was also of local interest. In fact, part of the general taxes levied on Rome were due to the opening of new so-called imperial routes, which connected the various provinces of the empire, which significantly helped trade and the circulation of ideas.

The imperial administration had also allowed for the internal self-government of the municipality called civitates. At the head of the civitates was a prefect (*praefectus civitatis*), who came from nearby military units. In time, Rome decided that the prefects would come from local representatives, the pariahs, who had obtained Roman citizenship. They are called *praeposit* (presidents). The *Praeposites* also had a tribal council, composed of various representatives of the local principality - *principies*, from which, later, emerged those who made efforts to restore the early Roman Empire and keep alive the slavery that was in debauchery.²²³

To conclude, however distorted the view of what the Roman administration in the Illyrian and Dardanian lands was and on what grounds it operated, it is fair to say that the Roman organization in the great linguistic-administrative provinces, called covenants (*convetus provinciae*), it was also a form of domestic government, which aimed to draw the Illyrians and Dardanians into the life of the Roman state. This will prove successful knowing that a large part of the Illyrians and Dardanians within a short time underwent this system as an important instrument to penetrate to the highest administrative, political and military hierarchy of the empire, even reaching to the throne of the emperor. These assemblies not only elected the heads of the country, but they also elected for one year the speaker of the assembly and the priest of the emperor's cult.

Under these circumstances evidently in the Illyrian and Dardanian areas the population was greatly involved in the life of the state administration, army and the economic life, by taking over its own destinies, at least those related to the local issues.

The latter started with large agricultural economies, *latifundia*, which set good opportunities for agricultural products, but also for benefits, as agricultural economies supplied large centers, but also the state itself, which needed them. This led to the development of trade, which in addition to agricultural products; various other goods were circulating thanks to the new roads and the safety of the caravans with free passage from one part of the Empire to another.²²⁴

Among these large and important arteries, however, it is necessary to distinguish those that went from the coast inland (in the directions *Salona-Sirminium*, *Narona-Sirminium*, *Jader-Suischia*) and many others from Senia, Epidaurum, Scodra and other cities leading to the

²²² See Malden, H. “*History of Rome*”, London 1830.

²²³ See: Niebur, G. B: “*The Roman History*”, London 1827 and Stipčević, Aleksandër: “*Ilirët*”, Prishtinë, 1980.

²²⁴ On roads in the Roman province, Illyricum, Macedonia, Pannonia and Moesia, see in particular: Philipp Ballif: “*Römische Strassen in Bosnien und der Hercegovina*”, Wien, 1893; Anton Mollinary: “*Die Römerstrassen in der europäischen Türkei*“, Zagreb, 1914; Esad Pasalic: “*Antička naselja i komunikacije u Bosni i Hercegovini*“, Sarajevo, 1960; Anton Premerstein – Simon Rutar: “*Römische Strassen und befestigungen in Kraina*”, Wien, 1899; Petrovic, Vladimir. “*Dardania u rimskim itinerarima*”, Beograd, 2007.

Danube basin and further east, or from the coasts of Tergeste through Tarsus to Jader, Narona, and south to Dyrrhachion, and further to Hellas. *Via Egnatia*, known as one of the most famous Roman roads outside Italy, which ran from Dyrrhachium and Apollonia to Thessaloniki, also partly passed through the Illyrian territories. It was built by the Romans on the line of the ancient road through which from Neolithic onwards the cultural influences from the east to the Adriatic and vice versa went. Another trans-regional route of great importance to Illyrian and Dardanian countries was the one that started from the southern Adriatic coast, passed through Lissus, crossed the Drin and exited Dardania, reaching Naissus (Nis) from where it then connected with the road coming from North (Danube) from Singidium and Viminacis ending in Thessaloniki.²²⁵

In addition to building new roads and reviving the ancient ones connecting the western parts with the eastern ones of the empire, the empire took measures to activate the waterways in the rivers through which the goods could circulate more easily. Thus, the Drin was navigable in the direction of Strabo to Dardania, while the waterways also went in the direction of Naissus.²²⁶

These economic developments also brought about changes in the civic life of the Illyrian and Dardanian provinces, which, for the most part, were self-governing. Thus, in addition to the main provincial centers, other cities flourished, especially the coastal ones, but also those on the mainland connecting important crossings. Here, too, roads were of great importance, as merchandise and mail passed through them, and all the fruits of Roman civilization passed through them, which evidently played an important role in the process of Romanizing good parts of Illyrian and Dardanian lands even on the continental parts. Therefore, in these circumstances the local centers were the first to experience the changes and it was natural that they had a significant development, because in addition to the administrative and military importance, they also turned into accumulators of a good part of the population, which was descending from the former mountain fortresses and remote settlements, which had remained detached, to pour their energy into an urban space, by means of which it created a better perspective.

The strengthening of new urban centers, where the Roman way of life was observed, as they were subject to imperial models, and the loss of importance of some fortified settlements in the hilly-mountainous parts, however did not lose the relevance of many Illyrian cities, especially coastal ones, which maintained autonomous governance along with socio-cultural traditions, producing even their own coins until the beginning of the 3rd century AD. Among these were Apollonia, Amantia, Phoenicia, Scupi and Naissus in Dardania and others.²²⁷

In these cities, in addition to the settlers, the colonial military and colonial Italics, who began to settle in the important Illyrian and Dardanian cities as merchants, entrepreneurs, or administrators, who already constituted what appeared to be the elite of Roman citizenship, rich Illyrians and Dardanians emerged, whose number was growing, belonging to a slave-owning stratum or the old tribal nobility. Having received Roman citizenship, they also gained the right to join the country's elite.

Here, in fact, originates the beginning of the involvement of Illyrians and Dardanians in the high governing and administrative hierarchy of the Empire, with many of them involved in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country up to the highest military and political levels, a successful passage, which will be crowned with achievements as high up as the imperial throne.

²²⁵ Stipčević, Aleksandër: "*Ilirët*", Prishtinë, 1980, p. 72.

²²⁶ See: Strabo: "*Geografija*", VII, pp. 5,7.

²²⁷ Petrović, Vladimir: "*Dardania u rimskim itinerarima*", Beograd, 2007.

Of course, this development could not be large-scale and socially, economically, culturally and politically profound, if it did not carry the stamp of *free citizenship*, which would include a good part of the population, benefiting first of all from a social and economic, but also political point of view.

Although the Roman Empire after the expansion to the east and west will preserve the elements of slave-owning society and, to some extent it will deepen it, nevertheless in parts of Illyricum and Dardania, the population will be offered the status of free population, constituting an important precondition for gaining *Roman citizenship*, a status that passed through that of civil rights. Small landowners, craftsmen, and numerous merchants will benefit. Evidently, in the Illyrian and Dardanian provinces, in addition to the colonial cities, which offered good opportunities for development and upliftment for the distinguished social strata from which they could enter the vast imperial life, will be the so-called *municipe*, as center - local settlements, setting the bases for a nucleus of the free population, wherever it saw economic and also social and cultural interests.

Municipes exercised significant local self-government, with traders, artisans, and others involved in the economic activities based on their own interests, as they were enjoying a portion of the taxes to use for their own needs. *Municipe* existed also in inland areas, some of them linked to mines, to which the empire attached great importance, as they provided large quantities of minerals. As such, they were subject to permanent military surveillance.²²⁸

One such *municipium*, in addition to Naisus, was Ulpiana in Dardania (near Prishtina),²²⁹ raised to this rank in the early 2nd century AD. Later, the settlement of Socanica (Municipium Dardanorum) will gain the same rank, though it will soon lose its importance following reforms by Aurelian, when after its separation from Moesia, the province of Dardania, Ulpiana, became stronger in 343 turning into a center of the episcopate.²³⁰

In addition to the *municipes*, some of which, thanks to economic development, were built into the community of cities of Roman rank of special military importance, as was the case with Scupi,²³¹ in Illyria and Dardania the presence of fortified settlements is observed, which were called *castella* or *opida* (castles or towns), whose inhabitants were initially not entitled to Roman citizenship, but later, after the edict of Caracalla in 212, they would also be granted this right, having an impact for the better on their social and economic status. These castles and towns, for the most part, appeared as centers of internal units of the *civitates*, where the local pariahs and the provincial authorities of the empire were located, which for many were independent.²³²

The preservation of fortified settlements in some Illyrian provinces and especially in Dardania, being in fact, both preserved and strengthened, that which can often be called ethnic identity, though now outside the well-known tribal dispersal that characterized pre-Roman Illyrian, has to do with a certain urban structure, characteristic of continental countries. It

²²⁸ Malden, H, "History of Rome", London 1830.

²²⁹ *Ulpiana* is known as one of the key centers connecting the roads between East and West. The first traces of civilization in Ulpiana are evidenced from the early prehistoric period, while the urbanized form Ulpiana reaches by the end of the first century AD. During the Roman period, it was one of the main connecting centers between Constantinople and Rome, with a passing intersection of the roads connecting the Adriatic Sea with the Aegean Sea and indirectly with the Black Sea. In 169 AD Ulpiana gained the status of municipium (Municipium Ulpianum), while the greatest development was achieved in the period between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, when it became a strong economic, cultural and also political center. The status of Municipin Splendissima also speaks for itself. At that time Ulpiana had straight roads, water supply as well as public, rural buildings. During the reign of Emperor Justinian, in the 6th century, it was renamed Justiniana Secunda.

²³⁰ Petrović Vladimir: "Dardania u rimskim itinerarima – gradovi i naselja", Beograd 2007, p. 97.

²³¹ *Scupi*, one of the most important cities of ancient Dardania, mentioned by Ptolemy, and in all likelihood during Roman times would have been the administrative center of the province of Dardania, in the time of Emperor Vespasian turned into a large military colony Roman, in which the veterans of Claudius VII legion were housed. Among these veterans, who, in the time of Mark Aurelius would gain the right of Roman citizenship, a good portion of them were of Scupic descent. Their Dardanian origin is evidenced by the characteristic Dardanian names: *Bithus*, *Daizo*, *Dassius*, *Metrius*, *Mestula*, *Sauso* etc. (See: V. Petrović: "Dardania u rimskim itinerarima", Beograd 2007, p. 105).

²³² Idem, p. 98.

combines social elements with those of security, which were important to the empire, in the face of various and numerous attacks by barbarian peoples coming from the East and occasionally entering the imperial space, endangering greatly its security and the well-being of economic life. From this point of view, even in the new imperial circumstances, Dardania will preserve much of its way of life, as this suited the Roman Empire, which originally included this province in that of the upper or superior Moesia to later emerge as a separate province, considering it as very important from a security point of view.²³³

In addition to connecting the eastern and southern parts of Illyria and Macedonia with Hellada, it also connected the central with the north up to the Danube, overseeing the main river flows (Morava, Iber, Drin and Vardar), as well as connecting the imperial roads running from east to west and vice versa, but also those in Ulpiana or Naissus (Nish) branching off to the East or Southeast.

Therefore, the urbanization of Dardania in the circumstances of the Roman occupation, less subject to the implementation of the “*Pax romana*” policy and more to the preservation of the economic and social base, aimed at maintaining the autochthonous element within its long-standing structures, which would come of use with the imperial ones of an economic and even more so strategic nature.

This is also confirmed by various archeological evidence in the area of Dardania (although it is believed that many of them have remained undiscovered and unexplored), such as those in Theranda (formerly Suha Reka,²³⁴ *Municipium DD Socanica*), where the topical and ethno cultural continuity is clear.²³⁵

These researches explain that the autochthonous elements of the proto-urban settlements are largely preserved even at the time of the clashes with foreign elements, especially the urban ones, coming from Rome, which were subject to the imperial strategic and economic concept. Dardania, as a separate entity, was of great importance, which would best be reflected in its administrative and political status as a separate province, which it gained after the Empire was convinced that this part retained the security key of its presence in this regional node. This is clearly seen in the way the development of the system of settlements of the *castella*, *urues*, *stationes*, *villae*, *canaboe* types (Timocum minus and Timocum maius in Knjazhevci in today’s Serbia), subordinated for economic and strategic purposes.²³⁶

However, the basic characteristics of urbanization of Dardania, at least in terms of 3rd and 4th centuries AD, is reflected in the fact that settlements, as it is known from the data of the itineraries, have been concentrated along roads and regions rich with ores (Ulpiana, *Municipium DD in Socanica*), while on the other hand their very establishment, including the Scupi colony, was not done on the basis of deduction. Presentation of these three centers in the central part of Dardania together with Naissus²³⁷ and Arribantion in the eastern part does

²³³ For more about the appearance of Dardania as a province in itself, which appears in the time of Aurelian, from the beginning of the 4th century AD See: M. Fukss: “*Moesie*”, PWRE XIV, 1928, col. 2389-2390. According to this author, the administrative borders of the province of Dardania during the time of the Roman Empire were significantly narrower than the ethnic ones, which in the west included parts from the Sharr mountains to beyond Nish, while in the north they flowed along the Ibër and Morava rivers. South to West Morava, including the province of Timok, which extended as far as Dhaka, while to the south it stretched from the upper Vardar estuary to Vodno and further south to Byzolors (present-day Veles in Macedonia).

²³⁴ For more see: N. Slavković-Đjurić: “*Ilirski tumuli kod Suve Reke*”, in GMKiM. IX/1964, pp. 537-549; E. Cerskov: “*Municipium DD kod Sočanice*”, Prishtinë-Beograd, 1970; Esad Pašalić: “*Period vladavine do kraja III vjeka naše ere*”, në “*Kulturna istorija Bosnje i Hercegovine*”, 186-187; M. Suić: “*Problems de Palegenese et d’urbanisation des centres illyriens*”, në St. Alb.X (2) 1973, pp. 105-116.

²³⁵ Mirdita, Zef: “*Studime dardane*”, Prishtinë, 1979, p. 112.

²³⁶ Idem, p. 113.

²³⁷ *Naissus* (present-day Nis), represents one of the most important Dardanian cities from early antiquity, which as such is also mentioned by Ptolemy. As a settlement, Naissus is mentioned in the 3rd century BC. According to some data, this settlement, between the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC was an inevitable point of confrontation between the Dardanians and the Skordiks. Naissus will fall into the hands of the Romans after the final defeat of the Dardanians, while according to some Roman sources in the time of Tiberius it will turn into a military colony from where Roman troops were sent to the East. At

not mean that only these four or five cities have presented the urban and administrative relief of Dardania. Thus, on the Naissus - Ulpiana road there is the famous ancient settlement of Vicianum,²³⁸ and Theranda²³⁹ in the western part connecting this space, through the mountainous parts, with Scupi. On the contrary, they are inevitable in all chronicles and maps, as being pre-Roman, that is, coming from the time of classical antiquity (7th-1st centuries BC), preserving their continuity thanks to their importance. Roman sources show that the Dukagjin plain and other parts too had cities, castles and other venues treated as *municipale* tribal communities, i.e. *civitates*, where already thanks to epigraphic materials two in the region Sopia-Popovljan-Mushitishtë, 18 kilometers northeast of Prizren,²⁴⁰ and the other at Dërsniku i Ulët, near Klina²⁴¹ have been confirmed.

Another municipal center of a *civitas* character in Dardania was found somewhere near Klllokot, not far from Vitia, rich with thermal springs known since antiquity, and also some more *civitates* centers in other parts of Dardania, such as the tribal territories, one in the area of today's Leshak, one in the Kumanova valley, and a third in South Morava with its main center in Davidoc,²⁴² centers of administrative-legal nature (*ordo decurionum duoviri iure dicundo*), in which the local population lived away from the influence of Romanization, resisting not only Romanization, but also their wide involvement in the dynamics of the imperial social and political developments, as was the case with other provinces. The reasons for such a "stagnation", which went in favor of preserving ethno cultural elements among the Dardanians, should probably be sought in the strategy of Rome itself, to preserve in these parts the local ethnos (that is, the autochthonous Dardanian), as only by this they would be bound to their land and the environment, thus preserving the province's defensive ability, which later, in the circumstances of internal divisions and barbaric attacks from the north, would prove decisive for further survival of the Empire, even in the form of Byzantium, which will appear from the 5th century AD onwards, preserving for nearly ten centuries the edifice of Western civilization in these parts.

ROMANIZATION AND THE ILLYRIAN-DARDANIAN IDENTITY

What will be seen as an interest of the Illyrians and Dardanians in the overall defense of the building of the Roman Empire, which was also a struggle for the defense of their country,

the time of Augustus there will stand the 4th Scythian and the 5th Macedonian legions. In the middle of the 2nd century, Naissus at the time of the Marcomannic wars was the center of defense of northern Dardania. The cohort of Aurelius I Dardanorum was formed and stayed there, as well as the first cohort of Dardanians. These cohorts, among others, were responsible for transporting minerals, storing ores in Dardania and securing roads leading from the Danube to Skup and Lissus as well as other roads to the east. In the vicinity of Naissus, as a suburbium was also Mediana, an ancient residence.

²³⁸ *Vicianum* (present-day Vushtrri), according to Roman itineraries it was 79 miles or 117 km away from Naissus in the direction of Lysus and quite close to Ulpiana. This settlement had a military, and also economic importance, as it connected the roads of the Ibër valley in the north, but also those that went south to Scup and Lissus, as well as another road to the west, through Sribin (Foqa) to the part of the Neretva in the Adriatic. (See: Mirdita, Zef: "Studime Dardane", Prishtinë, 1979, pp. 129-141; Jovanović, B.: "Stratigrafija naselja Vinčanske grupe kod Kosovske Mitrovice", in Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije VI-1961).

²³⁹ *Theranda*, a settlement which can also be related to Thermidova mentioned by Ptolemy, also represents an important ancient center. According to Roman tables it was 104 miles (154 km) away from Naissus (Nis). Its location is related to the triangle between today's Suhareka, Lubizhda, and Prizren. Claudius 7th Legion and Flavius 4th Legion were stationed there. (See: Mirdita, Zef: "Studime Dardane", Prishtinë, 1979, pp. 129-141; Djurić – Slavković, Nataša: "Ilirski tumuli kod Suva Reke", in Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije IX/1964).

²⁴⁰ E. Čerskov: "Rimljani na Kosovu i Metohiji", Beograd, 1969, pp. 40-41.

²⁴¹ Idem, p. 116.

²⁴² Ivan Mikulčić: "Teritoria Skupa", Shkup, 1971.

is often linked to Romanization as a natural process, which had included the Illyrians, Macedonians and the Dardanians, the same as it involved almost all the others who had been enslaved in the composition of the great empire, and who more and less, earlier or later, would be subject to its social, political, economic and cultural framework in accordance with their circumstances and interests.

Understanding this phenomenon on these grounds has not always been seen in accordance with the very nature of the issue and the realities created. Therefore, often, one-sided interpretations have created unstable dilemmas, which have turned into almost insurmountable stereotypes of black and white nature. Such are those related to the Romanization of the Illyrians and the Dardanians and its direction, which has been seen as “a blank paper” because “a host of scattered tribes and mostly hostile to each other” does not they have had nothing to protect nor to keep anything from,²⁴³ up to the assessment that “they are so well-placed in the military and political structures of the Roman Empire that they once became its defenders, as they did in the fight against barbaric attacks, because they fought to defend their own power gained by human power and similar.²⁴⁴

These and similar assessments are not only far from the historical truth, but at the same time absurd, because if it were as it was said that “there was nothing to defend”, then why would the wars happen over the centuries of the Romans to conquer the Illyrian, Macedonian and Dardanian lands and others on the other side of the Adriatic, beginning from the middle of the second century BC and ending at the beginning of the first century AD? ...

Also, the so-called “voluntary accommodation of the Illyrians” in the new empire is far from the truth as if they had nothing to save or anything to lose! Because, if that were the case, then would the Roman Empire, even after conquering their lands with so much blood, accept but also preserve much of their ethnic and cultural organization from tribal self-government economic life to urban structures, which, from a political point of view, will be sanctioned by the administrative organization in the provinces on the basis of broad self-government, where Illyricum together with Dardania will have special treatment, parts of which served as almost states in the state?

If the issues concerning the rise and fall of the Roman Empire from its inception to the end are seen from the point of view of its constituent factors, then it turns out that the Illyrians and Dardanians can also be considered its founders, a consciousness that has functioned bilaterally. Ancient sources, especially those coming from important ancient authors, starting from the literary ones by Homer,²⁴⁵ Hesiod,²⁴⁶ Virgil²⁴⁷ and others, and historians, geographers, philosophers and various chroniclers: Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates, Skylax, Skymna, Polybius, Apollodorus, Strabo, Pliny, Lucian, Ptolemy and others²⁴⁸ provide much data relating to the role of the Dardanians and Etruscans in the founding of Rome and its rise by the Etruscans and other Pelasgian tribes who were there from prehistoric times.

As seen in the previous chapters, the literary sources, from Homer to Virgil, although related to the creative imagination, focus on the Trojan War and the fate of the Trojans (mainly the Dardanians), heading along land roads (across Epirus), as Aeneas had done, so that then from there they would pass to the south of Italy, where, once settled, they would

²⁴³ For more see: Garašanin, Milutin: “*Istorijska i arheološka razmatranja u Ilirskoj državi*”, Beograd, 1974; Geza, Alfördy: “*Die römische Gesellschaft-Struktur und Eigenart*”, 1975;

²⁴⁴ For more see: Hans Ulrich Istinsky: “*Sicherheit al politisches Problem der römischen Keisertum*”, Baden-Baden, 1952; I. M. Rostowetz: “*Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft der Römische Staat*”; A. Morscy: “*Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der römischen Provinz Moesia superiore*”; Gavela, Branko: “*O Ilirskom substratu na Balkanu*”, Beograd, 1965.

²⁴⁵ “*Iliada*”, “*Odisea*”, Tiranë, 1979.

²⁴⁶ Hesiod: “*Theognia*”, *fragment, 134 at Sämtliche Werke (Theogonie, Werke und Tage)*, Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung (Band 38), Wiesbaden 1947.

²⁴⁷ Virgilius: “*Aeneidos*”, (Eneida), Book III.

²⁴⁸ See for more assessments by antiquity authors at: “*Ilirët dhe Ilira te autorët antikë*”, Prishtinë, 1979.

establish Rome. The literary version, which relies on certain sources, also finds support in Roman legends, but also in various Roman chronicles, where the founding of Rome is constantly linked to the transcendence of Aeneas and other Trojans to Italy, trying to compensate for the lost Troy by building another one in the West, as they will actually do. Something of this consciousness, certainly as a historical or similar memory, must have remained and acted upon the great-grandchildren of Aeneas, who, although they founded Rome, they always had in mind that they should return to Troy, that is, to their roots as to one day revive her soul, as Constantine the Great thought, a Dardanian from Naissus who would turn the center of the great empire from Rome to Byzantium, very close to Troy, thus prolonging the life of the Eastern Empire for another thousand years. The transfer of the capital from West to East, from Rome to Constantinople, was not just a matter of a strategic decision, as the great emperor of Dardania would be dictated by the circumstances of his survival at a time when slave-owning society was at its highest level of crisis, precisely having to give up this social order the time of which had passed, but also as a belief to return to his roots, which was turning into an obsession for Constantine. After all, didn't all those Illyrian-Dardanian emperors who would raise Byzantium to such an extent share the same feeling as to also calling it "Illyrian Byzantium",²⁴⁹ whose foundation, from the 4th century AD onwards in Illyricum, was Dardania and the Dardanians with Christianity as a postulate, which will first be accepted by them in order to then be accepted by others (Greeks, Romans and even Slavs who would accept it seven centuries later) to thus become a common spiritual denominator of a civilization that was different from that of the West?

Even without the conjectures of this nature, relying on literary and mythological sources from antiquity and already as such belonging to human memory, even ancient historical sources do not deny the transcendence of Aeneas and the defeated Trojans (Dardanians) in the south of Italy as well as their settlement there as a new beginning, as they do not deny the Pelasgian presence in these parts from the first time of the movement of the peoples in the transcendence between the third and second to the first millennium. Although scattered, from a factual point of view, they enable the reconstruction of this event. Moreover, this "detail" will not be forgotten even by historians of later centuries, although many of them no longer follow exactly the historical course of this development. Or even when they do, they turn away from this factor, for the sole reason that the Roman Empire is not seen continuously with an Eastern civilization, such as that of ancient Troy, but as a universal Western imperial concept that will be born as an antipode.

Always based on this historical data coming from ancient authors and the historiography of modern times if it has not been able to accept them in their entirety, it neither denied them, along with Aeneas and the Trojans, who will be transferred to the south of Italy, where the Dardanian tribes Galabret, Thunanes and Daunes will continue their dynasties in Calabria and Sicily and throughout southern Italy. They will later be joined by the population of the Peloponnese and Epirus (a move that will continue until the late Middle Ages after Skanderbeg's death) and the Pelasgian tribes from the North (Etruscans, Venetians and others), as part of the prehistoric pan-European stratification. They will also be involved in the founding of Rome and all that development from which the Roman Empire will emerge. Numerous historical sources, from both ancient and later authors, not only confirm the presence of important Illyrian tribes in northern and central Italy, but they are given an important place in all pre-Roman and Roman complexity without excluding their influence up to the formation of the Latin language as directly related to the language of the Illyrians.²⁵⁰

This is especially true of the Etruscans, whose presence is known in these parts from the eighth century BC onwards. Clearly, even today the Etruscan inscriptions and other traces of

²⁴⁹ Budimir, Milan: *"O etničkom odonosu dardanaca prema Ilirima"*, Beograd, 1950.

²⁵⁰ Geza, Alföldy: *"Die römische Gesellschaft-Struktur und Eigenart"*, 1975.

their civilization represent a great enigma of which only Albanian holds the key to unraveling the truth about the great role of the descendants of the Pelasgians who will play both in Hellenic and Roman civilizations.

When this factor - very important in showing that for the Illyrians, Dardanians, and Macedonians as descendants of the ancient Pelasgians - the foundation of the first Indo-European stratification on the old continent and beyond, the Roman Empire was neither unknown nor foreign. For more, it was also part of their past – in addition even after the Roman conquest the Illyrians and Dardanians, under the umbrella of the Roman Empire entered with their internal social structures from tribal to slave-owning dynasties. They were accepted and justified in the context of the new imperial and administrative reorganization with self-governing autonomies and other forms of preserving ethnic identity, showing clearly why Romanization as a cultural aspect in accordance with the performance of an early common heritage carried through the written language, such as official Latin, and an ethnicity and entirety being preserved, served as a convenient means for the Illyrians and Dardanians to rise so quickly in the political, military and economic hierarchy of the Roman Empire to the extent that they fight for it to the last drop.

Even beyond this historical view, which is very important to see some ancient or forgotten truths of the commonalities from antiquity between the Illyrians, Dardanians and Rome, which also determined their attitude towards the Roman Empire, but also of the Romans to them, if we go back to the new realities created after the long Illyrian-Roman wars, which will end with the conquest of the Illyrian and Dardanian lands in the rest of the Adriatic and in the Central part, wars and conquests maintaining the performance of permanent power struggles within sister kingdoms (Dardanian, Macedonian, Epirotan, Illyrian), it was to their interest in the new circumstances to benefit as much as possible and that this has been possible only through their inclusion within an advanced social, administrative, economic, political, and cultural system that was actually Roman. Surely, the Roman concept of “Pax Romana”, which created an opportunity to act and benefit within it, especially in the economic, military and cultural plan, was not only a suitable political formula, but it also presented the spirit of a concept, relying on the common roots since antiquity, although this remains a hypothetical issue, rather philosophical than historical. But if between Virgil’s fantasy of Aeneas’ longing for Troy pouring into Rome and Constantine the Great’s commitment to move the center of the empire to the East, twenty centuries later, we still have an action that turns history to the same point, then there is no need to ignore the fact that on its stage were the same actors (Illyrians and Dardanians) descendants of the ancient Pelasgians, from whom the Romans have their roots, entitled to behave in accordance with this historical consciousness.

If all the historical and literary reminiscences are taken into account, then even without them, it can be said that since the Illyrian space as an ethno-administrative unit, where according to the Roman concept Dardania was included as a separate province, being one of the greatest and most important from a strategic but also economic point of view, Romanization as a social and political aspect was inevitable, as it passed through the main roads connecting the West with the East and Central Europe with the South and North at the same time. Therefore, it was natural that on the reopening of ancient roads, the circulation of goods, people and ideas in various ways, benefited its population, especially after it enjoyed the right to hold a part of customs duties and other income for their own needs. If this is added the military factor and the importance it attached to the involvement of young people from this area in its structures, where soon they will have an opportunity to rise to the highest military hierarchy and thus benefit from a high treatment as Roman citizens among the most privileged using the opportunity to go as high as becoming emperors, as it repeatedly happened, then it is more than clear that these circumstances meant a high degree of social,

economic, and political, which also meant cultural integration. This integration was based on the platform of a system of known values in which the Illyrians, Dardanians, Macedonians, along with others, would participate to come to the level of an awareness that this was a way of defending their country, an empire that was in its infancy. The latter was also called Roman-Illyrian, which was led by Illyrian and Dardanian emperors, as it happened a little later with Byzantium being called “Illyrian Byzantium”.²⁵¹

The Romanization of a part of the Illyrians, Dardanians, Macedonians, Thracians and other populations occupied or included in the Roman Empire, existed to a considerable extent and was even a natural phenomenon, since, clearly, it was related to the very nature of the Empire as a cosmopolitan concept based on the well-known principles of Roman citizenship, with Latin as the official language and culture, providing an opportunity for the many people involved in it to exercise their rights as ordinary citizens, in which case the “*Pax Romana*” proclaimed by decree of Emperor Caracalla in 212 AD will practically turn into a further instigator of internal peace also due to the fact that in addition to full self-government, tribal communities as well as those of latifundia gain the right to return to an important economic alignment thanks to agricultural and mining production. So, “*Pax Romana*” conditioned the further strengthening of the provinces and at the same time was a political factor, which influenced the hierarchy of imperial power from the center to the provinces, i.e. from the senate to the army, a situation that could only be strengthened through political and economic self-government from the ground up, where the autochthonous factor, in this case Illyrian and Dardanian, gained an increasing weight and space to get to the point of turning into a decisive factor.

The data of the time, especially those coming from late antiquity, show that the economy had not only preserved the autochthonous element, but had strengthened it even more, since the *free peasants (in colae)*, and other similar strata, during the rule of Valentinian, Gratian and Valens are mentioned as extremely important economic factors, which helped the country to maintain stability whenever some parts were threatened.²⁵²

These and similar examples suffice to shed some light on the issue of Romanization and its special nature during the time of the Roman Empire as a development which meant the inclusion of all its citizens in a common administrative, social, legal and cultural system, but not the necessary and complete merging of indigenous entities, such as the Illyrians, Dardanians and others in its eastern part for the sole reason that such a thing was not in its interest, especially when it was clear that it will be the autochthonous population in these parts that will best protect the empire from the threats of barbarians coming from the North and East. They could do this best if they felt socially, politically and economically connected to it as if their own and in line with their interests. Here, in fact, is based the well-known defense strategy (*securitatis populi Romani*), which relied on the administrative organization of the self-government of many provinces from the highest levels to the local plains, which included castles and independent cities (“*castella*” and “*optida*”), which as localities of different economic nature and warehouses, also served as protection points.²⁵³

There have been many such independent settlements in Dardania and they have been at the central and strategic points of traffic, where there has been virtually no possibility of an intense Romanization, although the natural one, in which the stratum is involved, should not be excluded. elite of the population and that for economic or trade reasons within the state, administrative norms and social standards of the Empire, as part of the common system of

²⁵¹ For more see: Budimir, Milan: “*O etničkom odnosu dardanaca prema Ilirima*”, Beograd, 1950; “*Greci i Pelsci*”, Beograd, 1951.

²⁵² Mirdita, Zef: “*Studime dardane*”, Prishtinë, 1979, p. 128.

²⁵³ Evans, I. A: “*Antiquarian researches ub Illyricum*”, p. 167 and Rostovtzeff, I.M: “*The social and economic history of the Roman Empire*”, I, Oxford 1957, p. 243.

values from which there have been benefits. But even what can be called natural Romanization, in Dardania almost froze, so stagnated, after the military reforms of Diocletian at the end of the third century AD, since at this time the army not only does not speak, but does not even know speak Latin

There were many such independent settlements in Dardania and they were situated at the central and strategic points of traffic, with virtually no possibility of an intense Romanization, although a natural one, involving the elite strata of the population, should not be excluded or that which for economic or trade reasons within the state, administrative norms and social standards of the Empire, benefited as part of the common system of values. However, even what can be called natural Romanization in Dardania almost froze, stagnated, after the military reforms of Diocletian at the end of the third century AD, since at that time the army not only does not speak, but it does not even know to speak Latin.²⁵⁴

In this process, however, a distinction must be made between social and spiritual Romanization, from the political to the conscious, although they may go together, where the former helps the latter, while the latter then defines its character.

Indeed, it must be acknowledged that from the 1st century AD, following the complete conquest of Illyria and Dardania and other surrounding areas, Roman culture began to spread, but it also intertwined with ethno culture, especially with those forms, which could be turned into common values. In this process, there will be a positive development, as the intermingling with the local culture will extinguish the cultural changes prevailing between the Illyrian provinces and the Illyrians and Dardanians themselves because the great Illyrian family, and also the Dardanians, from a political point of view, shared no permanent internal connections. Thus, the main spreading centers of Roman culture, which should also be viewed as a cosmopolitan culture, became colonies and *municipes*, i.e. in those cities, which became important economic centers and it was only natural for them to have a dynamic cultural life, developing through a common language of communication - official and ecclesiastical, such as Latin.²⁵⁵

Before the initiation of the system of *municipales*, i.e. the establishment of colonies, which served the new administrative and economic infrastructure of the empire, it should be noted that the Romans paid attention to the appropriation of aristocratic strata by granting Roman law to the self-governing body of the Dardanian communities known as “*civitates*”, headed by the elder or “*princeps*” of the local population.²⁵⁶

The preservation of local communities “*civitates*” and their self-governing status is proof of Rome’s compromises against certain interests of the local population, which proves why Romanization in many parts of Dardania and certain areas in Illyricum could not be an intensive life, where the organization of autonomous life is preserved.²⁵⁷ This is evidenced by the preservation of elements of an autochthonous culture, such as epigraphic materials with names of the local population (Dardanian and Illyrian) and characteristic ethnographic elements, such as marama, a large necklace with medallions and others founds in different parts of Dardania.²⁵⁸

However, partial or unexplored Romanization in parts outside communications and administrative centers has not spared urban parts. This was also natural given the economic, political, and military factors that shaped the character of the new empire. In these new urban environments, in addition to the new urbanism, the Romans also brought cultural institutions,

²⁵⁴ See: Eusebius: “*Vita Constantini*”, IV/19.

²⁵⁵ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 177

²⁵⁶ See: Duje Rendić – Miočević: “*Problemi romanizacije Ilira*” at “II Simpozijum o Ilirima u antička doba”, Sarajevo, 1966. Posebna izdanja Centra za balkanološka ispitivanja, knjiga 2, Sarajevo, 1967, p. 167.

²⁵⁷ See: Rostovtzeff, I. M: “*The social and economic history of the Roman Empire*”, I, 2, Oxford, 1957, p. 243.

²⁵⁸ See: Čerškov, E: “*Antička bista žene iz Klokota*” in *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije* III/1958, p. 192.

from the small and covered theater (odeon), to the library and various museums. Also, in some cities, large amphitheatres were built with arenas, where sports competitions, as well as cultural activities were held.

Since some of the coastal cities, whether as colonies or well-known commercial centers that enjoyed autonomy (Butrint, Apollonia, Durrës, etc.) owned public cultural facilities (large amphitheatres, theaters and libraries), they will expand or others are added, as was the case with the Dyrrah and Apollonia amphitheatres, when more were built near them, much larger and in accordance with the new requirements.

In the first three centuries AD, plastic art, especially sculpture, developed significantly. In the ruins of Apollonia, Dyrrah, Butrint and other coastal cities, sculptures have been discovered according to Hellenistic art, but also those of Roman art. Similar sculptures are found in parts of Dardania, in the locality of Ulpiana, Justiniana Prima, Naissus, Scubi and other parts. In small plastics the main place is occupied by bronze figures, mostly produced in series, associated with deities and of secular characters.²⁵⁹

The art of mosaic was also widespread. Even the mosaics and their development, as well as the most beautiful works of architecture and sculpture, were associated with the upper strata of the provinces, both those of the cities and the rural settlements, of the owners of villas and latifundists.²⁶⁰

Of the same nature are some of the monumental mosaics in Vendenis, near Podujeva, recently discovered. But similar mosaics are also found in Theranda and Ulpiana, most of them with motifs deriving from ancient mythology.

In contrast to other parts of the Empire, with declining urban centers, in the third and fourth centuries AD, urban culture in Dardania will have a significant increase, among the most significant. This has little to do with the fact that the emperors of this time mostly came from this part and from the military caste which had begun to have the main say at the highest levels. It is more about political and administrative reforms that will be undertaken to ensure the Empire's existence threatened mostly from barbaric attacks, i.e. in strategic parts such as those of Illyricum and Dardania. This component, of course, had its positive consequences, as well as the strengthening of the political class by the province (mainly military, of local origin) and its influence on the imperial hierarchy, reflected in the transfer of the pyramid of power from the capital to the vicinity, also influencing the establishment and development of urban centers from fortifications (*castelas*) to cities (*oppida*), which became important political and economic factors.

It is noteworthy that from this point of view Dardania was the one almost benefiting the most, especially from the second half of the second century to the sixth century AD. The data of the time speaks of how many parts of the former settlements will be revived, and new ones will be added. Of course, it will be the strategic aspect (the possibility of protection from barbaric attacks) that played a role in this development, being the main factor. But, one should keep in mind that Dardania and the surrounding Illyrian parts were populated with an almost above the average of other areas, and also in these parts there were important urban centers, either because Dardania owned most of the metal ores, where their processing took place, or because in this place, with abundant river flows (Vardar in the direction of the Aegean, Iber

²⁵⁹ See: Mirdita, Zef: "*Studuime dardane*", Prishtinë, 1979; Shukriu, Edi: "*Ancient Kosova*", Prishtinë 2004; Mikulčić, Ivan: "*Teritoria Skupa*", in ZA.XX/2 1971; Barišić, Franjo: "*Današnji pokušaji ubikacije grada Justiniana Prima*", Zbornik Filozofskog Fakulteta, Beograd, VII-1963.

²⁶⁰ Dobruna – Salihu: "Plastika dekorative e figurave dhe e stelave mbivarrore të periudhës romake në Kosovë" ("Decorative plastic and tombstone figures of the Roman period in Kosovo"), Gjurmime Albanologjike 14/1985; Shukriu, Edi: "*Ancient Kosova*", Prishtinë, 2004.

and Morava in the direction of the Danube and the Black Sea, the White Drin in direction of the Adriatic), and also of the old roads connecting the West with the East.²⁶¹

Suffice it to mention the records by Ptolemy who in Dardania identifies the cities of Naissus, along with several others around as large centers of metal extraction and processing, and also important cities in these parts (Scubi, today's Skopje, Ulpiana, Theranda and others) which are also mentioned by other ancient authors, to which many more will be added during the Roman period, such as Justiniana Prima, Justiniana Secunda and others.²⁶²

Notably, Emperor Justinian I (527-556), who came from Taurus in Dardania, built and rebuilt 94 castles in these parts.²⁶³ And, in addition to the many castles, Emperor Justinian I, near the city of his birth, near the fortress of Bederiana, surrounded by a square wall with four tetrapyrge towers, built a magnificent city called Justiniana Prima.²⁶⁴

The Emperor also built a magnificent aqueduct, supplying water for all seasons. The Archbishop of Caesarea writes how the emperor adorned the city with temples, galleries, public squares, palaces, baths and shops.²⁶⁵ Procopius further announces how he made this a large, very popular and rich city, in such a way that it not only rose to the dignity of a metropolis, but was also chosen as the center of the Illyrian archbishop, since the cities of others yielded this honor to it as the largest city in the country.²⁶⁶

In addition to building Justiniana Prima and erecting it to a magnificent city, Procopius of Caesarea provides important information on the reconstruction of old centers, such as Ulpiana, which for various reasons seem to have lost their former importance.

“There was a city called Ulpiana in Dardania since ancient times. The walls of this (which were falling) he rebuilt anew. And after adorning it with grandeur and giving it today's beauty, he named it Justiniana Secunda.”²⁶⁷

On this occasion records also speak about the establishment of a neighboring city named Justinopolis, named after his uncle. Though, it is also interesting to mention the four important centers of Dardania, which will have their walls rebuilt: *Serdica*, *Naissus*, *Germana* and *Pantalia*, among which he founded three other cities: *Koritosa* (*Kratiskara*), *Muimedaba* and *Remesiana*.²⁶⁸

Justinian I has great merit that during his time, after bringing the archbishopric of the church of Dardania from Thessalonica to Justiniana Prima and turning it into an Illyrian vicariate directly connected with the Holy See, he began the construction of many churches by part of Naissus up to Astibo. Almost all the centers of Dardania gained their churches,

²⁶¹ Papazoglu, Fanula: “*Dardanska onomastika*” in Zbornik Filozofskog Fakulteta, Beograd, VIII-1,1964 and “*Makedonski gradovi u rimska doba*”, Skopje, 1957.

²⁶² Ptolemei, Claudii: “*Geographia*”, I-IV, Geographike Buch, Leipzig, 1843.

²⁶³ Ptasch, Carl: “*Dardani*” in: Paulus Realencyklopedi der clasischen Altertumswissenschaft, IV/1901 and “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tirana, 2002, p. 179.

²⁶⁴ *Prokopii Caesarensis (Prokopos of Caesarea)*, the great Byzantine historian of the time of Justinian. He was born in Caesarea, Palestine, at the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century AD. After graduating from the Sophist school in Gata, he settled in Constantinople and took an important place in the Byzantine administration. Procopius wrote three works: “*De Bellis*” (History of Wars), “*De aedificiis*” (*On Constructions*) and “*Historia arcana*” (Secret History). The treatise “*On Constructions*” contains notes on the constructions made by Justinian throughout the empire, where of interest are those about the geography and toponymy of Illyria and Dardania. Thus, the long list of castles built or rebuilt by Justinian, given to us by Procopius, also contains many names of cities and localities of Illyria and Dardania. Among the rebuilt castles the following are mentioned: Kesiana, Tezule, Usiana, Maskas, Liste, Keliriana, Zysbaes, Genzana, Petrizen, Euttyhia, Mulato, Belas, Kataros, Katareos, Pentza, Katafeteros, Dabanos, Kubinos, Germatza, Victoriana, Azeta, Durbulina, Surikon, Kusines, Tutiana, Balesiana, Bella, Kaltrelates, Kasyella, Maniana, Priskupera, Mitetes, Dardapara, Kesuna, Beriniana, Lasbaros, Kastellobretara, Edetizio, Dinion, Kekola, Emastos, Kastelona, Kapamolba, Seretos, Ptoheion, Kuino, Berzana, Arsa, Bleza, Labutza, Kuintu, Bermezion, Rotun, Kobenkiles, Markeliana, Primoniana, Pamilinos dhe Aria (See: “*De aedificiis*”, Book IV/4).

²⁶⁵ Idem, Book IV/17-26.

²⁶⁶ Idem, Book IV/27.

²⁶⁷ Idem, Book IV/30.

²⁶⁸ Idem, Book IV/33.

while the cities their cathedrals. To these facilities will be added gardens, properties and other spaces so that they are as rich and open as possible for the citizens.

The mention of the great Justiniana Prima, though related to Justinian I and his time, belonging to Byzantium, nevertheless highlights the growing Dardanian ethnic identity in the circumstances of the Roman Empire, which will be transferred to the realities of Byzantium, where the importance of Dardania as a province continues to grow, appearing on its own as of the 4th century. Therefore, as such, Justiniana Prima, in addition to its role for the future (4th - 6th centuries as an ecclesiastical center), it further explains the cultural and political development of Dardania during the previous centuries, i.e. from the time of Diocletian's reforms and those of Constantine the Great, when Dardania practically became a "transitional center". From it, the power of Rome will be transferred to Byzantium, the importance of which has been overlooked as it shows the metaphor of connection with Troy, with which the Pelasgians reappear with their heritage as a key factor, determining the relations between East and West, but this time with an oriole of Christianity.

However, Justiniana Prima, although appearing in the 5th century instead of the ancient Scupi devastated by the earthquake with catastrophic consequences in 518,²⁶⁹ presents the epicenter of the force that stretched from Naissus and continues further in the direction of Thessaloniki, where other important centers are connected: *Ulpiana*, *Theranda*, *Hersona*, *Bederiana*, *Taurisium* and others, a force that speaks of the importance that Dardania had in the important crossing of events related to Byzantium and what in history is known as the Middle Ages.

PART TWO

MIDDLE AGES

FIRST CHAPTER BYZANTIUM

ILLYRICUM AND EMERGING BYZANTIUM

There will be two developments of historical turning points that led to the weakening and a little later to the fall of the Roman Empire and the emergence of Byzantium, which will be known as the Roman Christian Empire.

The first concerns the crisis of the slave-owning system, which in turn bring an unbearable social and political crisis for the Empire.

²⁶⁹ According to the chronicle of Comes Marcelini "*Chronicon ad an 518*", in MGF AA, 100, among other things, it is said that "the earthquake that had fallen in Dardania, had destroyed 24 castles".

The second concerns the appearance of barbarian attacks (originally of the Huns and Goths and other tribes) in the eastern parts of the Empire.

These developments, however, would not have the weight of what they would actually have without the Christian factor, which began to appear in the first century AD and directly affected the emergence of Byzantium and what would be known as the Middle Ages.

On this occasion, it should be pointed out that the main actors in the arena of this historical development, marking a transition from one time to another, were exactly the Illyrians and Dardanians and their lands in Illyricum, as they were centuries ago when Rome was about to gain power over the Empire by extending to the areas of Illyricum, Dardania, Macedonia, Greece, and other areas from east and north, as will the barbarian peoples (Goths, Huns, Slavs, and others) do from the East, rising above the Illyrian and Dardanian space to turn it into part of other ethnic, cultural and state realities.

However, the Illyrians, Dardanians, Macedonians, and others, in a fierce match with the barbarian invaders, from the Middle Ages onwards, within the common Empire, though guided by the concept of Roman citizenship of the universalism of citizenship (*civis romanes*) and the Byzantine one (*romaios*), also appear with a certain *self-governing, administrative* and *religious* identity, within the overall structure of the imperial state edifice.

Before this great change took place, defined temporarily as the Middle Ages and as Byzantium, the Illyrian-Dardanians from the 10th century AD onwards will be viewed as *Albans, Arvanites, Albani, Arbanasi, Rabani* and otherwise, and their space as *Alabani, Albaniae, Albanon* and otherwise in accordance with the different languages, which will last for another thousand years, one should look into the true circumstances that preceded it, that is, that brought it about.

Here, too, the main say within the concept of universalism of citizenship will belong to the Roman emperors of Illyrian-Dardanian origin as well as Illyricum itself as a key province of the Empire on which pressure will be exercised affecting but also accelerating this historical development. Thus, it will be Emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD) of Illyrian descent who will begin the deepest and most comprehensive reforms to date, assigning Illyricum with an important role in the economic and political revitalization of the Empire. This path will be continued by another emperor of Dardania, Constantine the Great (306-337 AD), through reforms which, like the entire eastern part of the Empire, will leave Illyricum in the East, i.e. Byzantium.

Considering that the imperial crisis could be resolved through administrative reforms, that is, that the central government be finally moved to the provincial one, where the military class enjoyed support, having its own epicenter there, it is known that Diocletian divided the imperial power, first between two, then between four co-rulers, all of Illyrian-Dardanian origin. By this measure, at the end of the 4th century, the beginning of the division of the Empire into two parts was practically marked. The eastern part was formed by two large prefectures: the East and the Illyrian ones. The center of the latter was Sirmium (Srem Mitrovica). Furthermore, the prefecture of Illyricum was divided into 3 dioceses, which included some even smaller administrative units, the provinces. The first included the provinces of southern Dalmatia and northern Illyria centered in Shkodra (Prevalitana), the province of New Epirus (Epirus Nova) from Durrah to Old Epirus (Epirus Vetus), and the lands south of Vjosa, centered at Nicopolis.²⁷⁰

Following this measure, which will for a short time extend the life scope of the slave-owning regime, though it will not save it from ultimate failure ending with its dissolution, Constantine the Great was aware that the Empire would face another even greater internal social and political upheaval due to the fact that liberation from slavery required a certain

²⁷⁰ For more see: Ostrogorski, Georg: "*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*", Tiranë, 2002; Faverial, Zhan Klod: "*Historia (më e vjetër) e Shqipërisë*", Tiranë 2004, p. 73.

social dividend, which was demanded by the free strata, so he accepted Christianity as a good means to be used to control the masses, while at the same time he strengthened his absolute imperial power by means of the power of the church, which he would turn into his own ally.

“With the power of God and his blessing”, the Emperor and the church empowered with the blessing of the Emperor, created a new binomial of almost intangible power, which will change the social and political direction of the Empire, but also of civilization in general. This historic act, among the most important of the time, was preceded by the renowned order banning the persecution of Christians (311 AD), which two years later was accompanied by another order to support Christianity, by which Christianity was accepted as the official faith of the Empire, which, clearly, will also become a co-participant in state governance, with the *Roman universe* being replaced by the *Christian universe*, although such an aspiration would be constantly faced with disappointments in the face of political reality.

To codify this historic decision, in 325 Emperor Constantine the Great summoned the Christian Council of Nicaea or the Council of Nicaea, which was attended by 318 bishops from all over the Empire. The existence of Christianity in Illyricum and Dardania is evidenced by 13 signatures of bishops present in Niceae, among whom Bishop Dacus of Scupi (today's Skopje) signed in the documents of the council as “*Dacus Dardaniae*” and Budius of Stobi in Macedonia and Korcyra (Corfu).²⁷¹

With Christianity becoming official, Emperor Constantine the Great in 326 announced his permanent departure from Rome to Constantinople, on which occasion, four years later, he relocated the seat of the Empire from Rome to Byzantium, which in 330 he named after himself, opening a new page in the history of civilization, where Christianity will become one of the main determinants of this great change.

Before further action is taken on the followers of Constantine the Great, involved in the project to which he has already given his own stamp, remaining within the framework of a ten-century historical development, some clarification is needed about Byzantium as a political-religious organism with Roman state structure, Greek culture and Christian faith, a synthesis made possible by the displacement of the gravity of the Roman Empire to the East, caused by the 4th century, a crisis the main consequence of which was the Christianization of the Roman Empire and the establishment of a new capital in the Bosphorus, in a small ancient site of Byzantium, near the legendary Troy, which was certainly not chosen by chance. This not only commemorated the greatest kingdom of the time, which twenty-many centuries ago stood right there as a bridge connecting the West with the East from which its world power sprang, but by this action, the Emperor, like a Dardanian he was, was announcing that he was returning to the origins of his royal family, when the latter, Priam, had lost the war and was forced to make up for his loss somewhere in the West, that is, Rome.²⁷²

Even despite these associations with which numerous biographies of the powerful emperor still deal today and may have influenced the historical step of Emperor Constantine, in fact Byzantine history is first and foremost a new period of Roman history and the Byzantine state is nothing but a continuation of the old Roman Empire. As it is known, the term “Byzantine” was born very late and the real “Byzantines” did not know it. They continued to be called “Romans”, while the Byzantine emperors called themselves Roman emperors.²⁷³

This “continuity” also had the so-called overcoming of the last three centuries of one and the three centuries of the beginning of the other, which led from the Roman Empire to that of medieval Byzantium, where the life forms of ancient Rome fading bit by bit, leaving room for

²⁷¹ Edwien, Jacques: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 163; Gjini, Gasper: “*Skoposko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb 1986, p. 29.

²⁷² Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 17.

²⁷³ Idem, p. 17.

new phenomena of Byzantine civilization, emerging in the circumstances when the state emerges as a *political-religious* organism, the emperor becomes a *political-religious* cult, and the citizens slaves of the Emperor.

Of course, all this change would not be possible without a sublime unity of ancient civilization between the Roman state organization and what appeared Greek culture, merging into a new concept of life and Christianity, in which the state and ancient cultures find complete denial. The one paving the way for this change, however, is Emperor Diocletian, with the war he declared to the Republic of Rome. As is well known, Diocletian, who came to power at a time of deep political and economic crisis in the Empire, was forced to do something to cope with the difficult situation, so he returned to radical reform. Drawing conclusions from the experience of the previous development of the Roman state, he systematically reorganized the changes made while making a general restructuring of the state system.²⁷⁴

Diocletian's reform was perfected by Constantine the Great and thus a new administrative system was born, becoming a starting point of the Byzantine system.²⁷⁵

Reconstruction of the provincial administration, undertaken by Diocletian, put an end to Italy's privileged position erasing the already meaningless distinction between the *senatorial provinces and the military-ruled imperial provinces*. This caused Italy, which previously enjoyed the position of a metropolitan territory, to split into provinces being forced to shed attributes like any other province of the Empire.²⁷⁶

The administrative division of the country into provinces, prefectures, dioceses, and other units weakened the central government, while increasing the power of the Emperor and the military on which he increasingly relied. Thus, the Emperor, through the prefect, governor, oversaw everything that could be said to have turned him into an absolutist. Obviously, from this centralized hierarchy, a large bureaucratic apparatus was created, which was effective but also expensive for the state. However, it was maintained as an important tool in the hands of the emperor to exercise power from the position of unlimited sovereign.

The most important feature of the Diocletian-Constantinian administrative system was the clear separation of military and civilian authority. Thus, the civil administration of a province was in the hands of the governor of the province, and the military was in the hands of the duke (*dux*), who exercised military command over one or more provinces.

However, in the field of military organization, both Diocletian and Constantine carried out substantial reforms. Previously the army was mainly a border army. The crisis of the time highlighted its inability to cope with the internal and external security problems of the country, especially protection from barbaric attacks in various parts. Diocletian took steps to strengthen the army at the border, making it at the same time mobile and on standby for action as needed. For this reason he created special units, called *exercitu comitatensis*, which were later elaborated by Constantine, who no longer relied on the Praetorian Guard, known for its long-standing claims to emperors.²⁷⁷ Constantine went so far as to reform and train the army by separating the moving troops (*comitatensis*) from the frontier ones (*limitanei*), a division that proved successful both internally and externally, as it restored imperial security to the emperors, while denying the enemies (barbarians) the possibility of threat from outside for a long time by forcing them to submit to internal rules.

In addition to the Roman state structure factor, as a prerequisite for the creation of Byzantine synthesis and, as seen through the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine the Great,

²⁷⁴ Idem, p. 21.

²⁷⁵ Vogz, J: "Constantin der Grosse und sein Jahrhundert", Berlin, 1960.

²⁷⁶ Ostrogorski, Georg: "Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine", Tiranë, 2002, p. 21.

²⁷⁷ For more see: Mommsen, T: "Das römische Militärwesen seit Diocletians", Leipzig, 1899; Ensslin, W: „Zum Heermeisteramt des spätrömischen Reichs“, 129.

remaining at its foundation, but as clearly reformed, so was Christianity, as one of the factors, very importantly influencing the state to turn into a *political-religious* organism, while turning the Emperor into a *religious-political cult*.

Here, too, one of the most pressing issues in historiography is that of Emperor Constantine's attitude toward Christianity. Some think that he was religiously indifferent and that he supported Christianity simply for political purposes, which in those circumstances could go hand in hand, as it actually happened. Others believe in his spiritual conversion recognizing his greatest merit for the turning point in the religious policy of the Empire which needed something like that to add to conceive the social and spiritual cohesion in debauchery. Numerous arguments have been made about one view or the other, and in fact there is plenty of reason to talk about his union with Christianity as a matter of the social emancipation it needed to further strengthen its power over other challenges that he faced from within, as there are many other reasons to defend the thesis of his allegiance to the old pagan traditions from which he did not finally detach himself as required by those who embraced Christianity.²⁷⁸

Although Christianity continues to treat Constantine the Great as deserving linking it to spiritual determination, political goals were decisive for Constantine to accept Christianity as one of the religions of the Roman Empire, which made him known in the Edict of Milan of 313. There is much evidence to suggest that he did not devote himself entirely to Christianity, nor did he become a Christian in the sense that his Byzantine descendants understood it, as he never severed any ties with pagan traditions.²⁷⁹

On the contrary, the powerful emperor did not ban paganism. This should be noted in this case as well, as this clarifies the real relationship between politics and power, which has influenced Christianity to be accepted turning into an aid to imperial power. In fact, he himself took part in some of these rites, especially in the sun rite, this characteristic rite, which in his hometown, Dardania, was always kept alive up to our time, despite the great influence coming with Christianity and later with Islam in these parts, trying to attribute its power to the creator (God).

Regardless of Constantine's personal attitude toward Christianity and what convictions he maintained, however, it remains an undeniable fact that he turned religion into a political instrument, that he made it co-governing, influencing the *universal vision* of the Roman Empire to be replaced by the *Christian one*, where the church was heavily influenced by politics, although it was heavily exploited by politics for its own purposes, as mutual concessions, the most important of which is that the emperor used ecclesiastical blessing to get the title of divine representative in land as a powerful weapon for exercising absolute power.

The clearest and historically most important example of the influence of Christianity on the Roman state in Constantine's time is that of the Council of Nicaea, in 325, the first of a series of ecumenical councils, which laid the dogmatic and canonical basis of the Christian church.

Notably, at this Council, the issue of the presbyter of Alexandria, Arie, was on the agenda, who refused to accept the *equality of the Father and the Son* as compatible with monotheism, denying in this way the *divine nature* of Christ. The *Arian* doctrine was condemned by the Council, which recognized the dogma of the *co-substance of the Father with the Son*. In this way he became the mother of the faith, which would later, after being

²⁷⁸ Throughout the extensive bibliography that exists on this subject Georg Ostrogorski (History of the Byzantine Empire) is defined in the following authors: Burckhardt, J: "Die Zeit Constantins des Grosse", Second completed edition, Stoccardë 1929; Schwartz, E: "Keiser Constantin und die chistliche Kirche"; Zeller, J: "Quelques remarques sul la "vision" de Constatin "likuide"; Lietzman, K: "Der Glaube Konstatins des Grossen", Berlin, 1937; Vogt, J: "Costantin der Grosse und sein Jahrhundert".

²⁷⁹ Ostrogorski, Georg: "Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine", Tiranë, 2002, p. 29.

supplemented by the resolutions of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381, become the credo of the Christian church.²⁸⁰

Thus, the connection between the state and the church brought both great benefits, but at the same time new difficulties, as many of the state problems at the same time became ecclesiastical, as it happened that the ecclesiastical ones also became state, thus the church debates became they intertwined with the political ones and became a permanent factor not only in the history of the church, but also in that of the state and thus of politics and thus of society.

These phenomena date back to the time of Constantine the Great. Especially that of *Arianism*, which did not disappear with the decisions of the Council of Nicaea, although it seemed that there was an answer given that, at least formally, though not essentially, will receive its final epilogue at the Second Council.

From the First to the Second Council, from Nicaea to Constantinople, it will take more than half a century of quarrels and disagreements involving the sons of Constantine the Great - Constans, who ruled the eastern half, and was declared in support of Arianism, who died at a very early age, in 340, and Constantius, to whom the western part belonged, supported Nicaea's doctrine.

Disagreements between the brothers over ecclesiastical doctrines continued for a long time, until the elder died in the battle against the usurper Magnentius (350), who was then defeated by Constans in a bloody battle.²⁸¹

Constans' victory brought about an increase in the political weight of the eastern part of the Empire. The emperor intended to equate the power of Constantinople with that of Rome, which was to the detriment of semi-pagan Rome. On this occasion he proclaimed Arianism as state religion (359). But the temporary victory of Arianism in the Roman-Byzantine state had another long-term consequence, as at that time the conversion of the Goths to Christianity began, in which case the Germanic peoples recognized Christianity in its Arian version. In 343, Ulfilas, who translated the Bible into Gothic, was ordained bishop by the Arian Eusebio of Nicomedia. This will have a major impact on the western parts of the Empire, especially in Illyricum and Dardania,²⁸² where religious differences over this view will be expressed, continuing to divide Christianity from within and hence the Empire too.

The period of religious conflict in the Empire, culminating in Constantine's decision to restore Arianism, was opposed by Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363), who declared war on the new religion, Christianity, by restoring paganism. Julian's actions, the last representative of the dynasty of Constantine the Great, were of a philosophical and less political nature. Relying on the intellectual and political elites of Rome as well as the West in general could satisfy certain lodges, but not the broad strata, who had already returned under the influence of Christianity and the promises of the spiritual life spoken of everywhere, sermons on the hope that only the ecclesiastical doctrine of equality could offer, which was tempting as well as intoxicating to the masses, which with this "elixir" could become an instrument of social and political movements regardless of the direction they could not to be anything but violent. Evidently freedom of religion was not able to protect free faith, which turned out that Julian was doomed to fail as any idea which did not have the support of the masses was doomed to fail, even if it was manipulative in the forms it appeared. This failure was sealed by his death from a wound he received in a battle against the Persians. His work also died with him, and his failure showed that the victory of Christianity was unstoppable as there were measures behind it which had turned into hostages of expectations for equality and pious life, which would turn into a mostly destructive ideology.

²⁸⁰ Idem, p. 29.

²⁸¹ Idem, p. 30.

²⁸² Idem, p. 31.

The ultimate victory of Orthodox Christianity created a spirit of relief as it stopped the bloody persecution that had continued for more than two centuries in the Empire, though it did not change the social and political situation in the country, much less the quarrels within the church, which for a long time continued with a great scuffle not only between Arianism and the supporters of the Council of Nicaea, i.e. the East and the West, but also between the Orthodox about the *monophysite* dogma, *dyophysite*, and the *undecided* dogma.²⁸³

On this occasion, it was also pointed out that the great power liberated after the collapse of the slave-owning system was not able to create better economic or social circumstances. On the contrary, many of the economies functioning on the basis of slavery quickly lost production, and so did farming, mining, and other public works. Craftsmanship and trade itself also suffered setbacks, with many cities beginning to lose their importance. The only branch where, after the fall of the slave-owning system, there was some movement forward was agriculture, as free peasantry gained the opportunity to increase property, while the previous owners of land included the latifundus system benefited from the new forms of its exploitation by the colonists, who appeared as tenants coming from the ranks of expropriated peasants. They rented land from the big landowners (*peculia*) along with the equipment needed to cultivate it, and were obliged to give the landowners a portion of the produce as well as do a few days of anchorage work. The ranks of the settlers included slaves who had gained freedom, prisoners of war who were captured, as well as small slave owners who were being ruined.²⁸⁴

Clearly, in general the *colonates* experienced great development in the eastern provinces from the very beginning. However, even though the situation of the settlers was better than that of the slaves, it brought new forms of exploitation, a different tax system from that of land, livestock and others required by the state, beginning to complicate the situation of the free social stratum, which appeared as the hope for the new economy which largely justified the farming system.

Against these circumstances, the dissatisfaction of the settlers began to emerge, as expressed by their departure from this new system of work, which presented significant difficulties, forcing the central government to take measures against the settlers who did not respond to its obligations. The decrees of Emperor Valentinian of 371 for Illyria are known, according to which the settlers, who were *free citizens*, began to lose their freedom thanks to the binding laws connecting them to the way of its exploitation, but also through numerous taxes which became unbearable as much as the Empire plunged into wars with the barbarians, who had begun to greatly enter from the North-East and the East, plundering and leaving great destructions behind. The destructive expeditions of the barbarians began to intensify especially after the second half of the 4th century AD as large crowds of nomadic barbarians, primarily the Huns, began to cross the border and, crossing the Danube, settle in the territory of Central Illyricum. The armies of the Empire were unable to withstand these attacks, though the Illyrian-Dardanian population remained, which, in order to defend their property they had to withstand them. Here we must see the reason why the barbarian tribes were not as successful in these parts as the Goths and Visigoths were in the eastern parts (Thrace), who, after being able to withstand the Battle of Adrianople in 378 against an imperial army ill-prepared for such opponents, or because there will be those that will use this factor for

²⁸³ The “*dyophysites*”, or supporters of the “two natures”, espoused the view of the existence of the “two natures” of Christ: divine and human, manifested by the concept of the “Man-God”. The founder of this doctrine was Nestor of Alexandria, who managed to become the bishop of Constantinople. While the “*monophysites*” deny the human nature of Christ, supporting only the divine. In the Fourth Council of the Christian Church at Chalcedon in 451 dogmas were formed on the two natures of Christ, both perfect, inseparable, but distinct. Both *Nestorianism* and *Monophysitism* were condemned on this occasion. In relation to them, the Chalcedonian formula represented in a way a middle position, according to which salvation could only come from the savior who was at once the perfect God and the perfect one.

²⁸⁴ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Prishtinë, 1976, p. 124.

accounts of various natures, which will come to light later (the question of the “vitalism” of the Empire) with fresh blood and other social and political shortages in relations between the centralist “emperors” and the provincial “military”), a way will be opened for them to the western provinces of Illyricum, well-known penetrations, which made the Goths reach as far as the shores of the Adriatic.

This prompted Valentin’s successor, Theodosius I, having no other option but to expel the Goths from the occupied lands, to enter into agreements with them, offering them lands in the northern and western parts of the peninsula, providing they pledged to perform the military service for the Empire under the leadership of their commanders. According to this agreement called *foedus*, the Ostrogoths would settle in Pannonia, while the Visigoths in the northern part of the Thracian diocese. Thanks to this agreement, Theodosius was able to avoid new barbarian attacks for some time and ensure internal social “peace”.²⁸⁵

Agreements with the barbarians, however, did not bring internal peace to the Empire, nor did they increase the security desired by external threats. On the contrary, according to the reforms of Constantine the Great, the empire, already divided into two parts, was also affected by internal social and economic contradictions, which in turn led to known political clashes and divisions, which, in 395, after the death of Theodosius brought the division of the Empire into two separate parts: the Roman Empire in the West and the East in Constantinople, ruled by his sons Honorius and Arcadius.

This division also affected Illyricum because its northern provinces (Noricum, Pannonia and Dalmatia) fell in the Illyrian diocese and, as a result, were political and ecclesiastical parts of the Western Empire, while the Illyrian provinces that made up the Macedonian diocese eventually merged with the Eastern Empire.²⁸⁶

Although these provinces were subject to the political dependence of Constantinople, from a religious point of view they still remained under the jurisdiction of the Church of Rome, which as recorded, this unfortunate discrepancy between political and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Illyrian prefecture provided a good opportunity for the bishops to express their growing rivalry and test their forces, which will be horrible for these parts.²⁸⁷

Of course, this division was inevitable and final because after the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine the Great the center of gravity shifted from West to East, in which case the central provinces, especially those of Illyricum, gained great importance and important functions, significantly shifting the ratio of forces in favor of the East.

Despite this division and till the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the idea of the unity of the Empire was preserved. In those circumstances there was no longer any talk of two empires, but of rather two parts of a single empire, governed by two emperors.

The two emperors’ rule, as well as their seemingly unified decrees, did not bring the East closer to the West. On the contrary, the West began to weaken even more from the penetrations of the barbarians, such as those of Alaric, who turned to Italy and after three attempts was able to conquer and plunder Rome (410). Meanwhile in the East, at the beginning of the 5th century, a relatively long period of calm begins, proving that the barbarians, with whom peace was established after their victory at Adrianople, went to the benefit of the East, while the West was being confronted with a major ordeal of destruction to which it would soon be subjected, precisely by the Goths and other barbarians, who had been accepted supposedly to “protect” the Empire. The same will actually happen with the Slavs, three centuries later, when they will be accepted by the emperor Heracles to protect the East from other barbarians and for this they will be placed in Illyricum, where they will turn to

²⁸⁵ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Prishtinë, 1967, p. 126.

²⁸⁶ Jacques, Edwin: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 165.

²⁸⁷ Idem, p. 165.

causing its destruction and against the Western spirit, whose bearers were the Illyrians, affecting also a final return of Byzantium to the eastern Empire, supervised by the Easterners.

However, until the collapse of the Western spirit by the Slavs in favor of Eastern Byzantinism, in this period of “relative calm” the University of Constantinople was founded and the *Codex Theodosianus* spread. The new university became an important cultural and educational center of the Empire, where ten Greeks and ten Latins, five Greek and three Latin orators, a philosopher and two jurists taught.²⁸⁸

Codex Theodosianus distributed in the East and West on behalf of the emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III was important, as the new code had to provide for new, more solid foundations to the administration of justice as an expression of the legal unity of the Empire, actually opening a period of peace between the two halves of the Empire, though that did not prevent the process of its division, which was inevitable and increasingly tangible.

To this division, however, the most obvious expression was given by the deepening of the linguistic division. Because in the West the knowledge of the Greek language was disappearing, while in the East the Latin language, although it remained the official language and as such was cultivated unnaturally, was constantly losing its position against the Greek language. Thus, the Greekization of the East progressed without stopping, especially in the time of Emperor Theodosius II and Empress Eudocia Augustana.²⁸⁹

The growing linguistic division, which in fact represented the division between the two political, social and cultural worldviews, the Eastern and the Western, in fact, in the East also brought about the creation of an *ecclesiastical-national* culture, which was presented in Neighboring Armenia, where the Armenian alphabet and the translation of the *Bible into Armenian* appeared.²⁹⁰

This was an important step in the formation of a *national-ethnic consciousness* that Byzantium aimed at, and little by little it managed to raise it to a general level with which Christians would be nourished to keep themselves connected to Byzantinism.

Determining the Byzantine church for *national religious consciousness* will not find support from the Roman church. Although the Western Empire, due to barbaric attacks, especially of the Huns, was on the verge of collapse, it still proved the determination of *Roman unity* over the well-known attitudes of the Church of Rome about the universal concept of civilization to which it still sought to remain faithful. It was Pope Leo the Great (640-661) who pointed out that the Roman Church remained a Roman power that did not give up the universal Christian dogma, despite the fact that the Western Empire would eventually descend from the historical scene precisely because it lacked its ethnic and national identification as happened with the eastern church, which, with the acceptance of autocephaly, turned it into a powerful tool of survival, governance and for more even political rule.

In fact, in line with Roman unity, based on Christian dogma, as well as great efforts to turn a common denominator of the Empire into “two wings” through extensive administrative, political and social reforms (eastern and western), the emergence of *three Illyrian-Dardanian identities* within the imperial one must be seen: the *self-governing*, *administrative* and the *ecclesiastical and legal*.

Self-governing identity - known since the first Roman conquests beyond the Adriatic, when the Roman army, after long battles, would force King Gentius to accept vassalage, while preparing the ground for other invasions against the Ardians, Dalmatians and of tribes and kingdoms in Epirus and Dardania. In fact, self-government and internal autonomy will be based on ethnic identity, so it is not unreasonable for *self-government* to be called *ethnic identity*, as its basis has been ethnicity, which was not only preserved but also strengthened.

²⁸⁸ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 32.

²⁸⁹ Idem, p. 33.

²⁹⁰ See: Stein: “*Geschichte*”, I, 425; A. Mikelian: “*Die armenische Kirsche in iren Beziehungen zur byzantinischen*”, 1892.

This principle was in line with the well-known Roman policy of “Pax Romana”, including the inclusion of other parts of the Empire, especially strategic ones such as Illyricum, Dardania, Macedonia, but also Thrace and other parts in the East and Africa. It did not mean complete subjugation in accordance with the conquest, but rather as an agreement for a common empire built on the principles of world universalism, which would later be supplemented with those of the Christian axis (ecumenism). Therefore, on these principles, the statuses of self-governing provinces, those of internal (tribal) autonomy and others emerge, where, in addition to some easy tribunes and military obligations, others will be left to the locals to self-govern and develop, provided that internal development is based on common imperial priorities and is at their service from which everyone will benefit.

The forms of self-government and internal autonomy have been different evolving according to circumstances and interests of the Roman Empire in these parts. These forms of administrative organization of the Empire will continue even after complete conquest of the Illyrian lands from the middle of the second century BC onwards. They represented the most important instrument of inclusion but also of the integration of Illyria in the economic, social and political structures of the Empire, from where the process of Romanization will begin, discussed before as a natural development, which in a certain stage, especially when the attacks of the barbarians in the north and north-east, which usually passed through the Illyrian and Dardanian lands, appear, will produce an awareness that the protection of the Empire from the barbarians at the same time meant defending their own country.

Administrative identity - represents another stage, when local-ethnic identity, preserved and developed during internal self-governments, rises to a higher social and political level, with certain circles expanding into a larger circle and mutual functioning subjected to a greater space. This form of administrative organization broke the well-known tribal and provincial barriers, characteristic of some Illyrian tribes, which, even without being conquered by Rome, were economically and socially closed, while the opening created opportunities for new interconnections, which also needed adequate forms of government, to then lead to their merging into a common stratification while, nevertheless, remaining within their known ethnos.

During Diocletian’s time, numerous self-governing units, as well as those enjoying internal and tribal autonomy within other well-known organizational forms, would be included in joint administrative units. Thus, as we know, according to Diocletian’s reform, the great province of Illyricum was created, one of the four prefectures of the Empire, divided into 12 dioceses. A decision from the year 292 is well known as the Empire divided into four prefectures with four Caesars, two of them of Illyrian descent: Constantine Chlorus and Galerius. The latter was allowed to rule Illyricum, stretching from *Dalmatia* to the Danube in the north, including Scodra-centric *Prevalitana* and Southern Dalmatia, Dioclea (present-day Montenegro) and part of Scodra, followed by *Dardania* centered on Scupi, which included the central areas of Dardania (with those of present-day Macedonia as far as Astibo), while the province of *New Epirus* centered on Dyrrah included the provinces from the Adriatic to the Vjosa River. *Old Epirus*, centered on Nicopolis, included lands south of the Vjosa to the bay of Preveza.

The merger of these provinces into an administrative province was of multiple benefit for the internal unification of self-governing and autonomous units with the status of autonomous *civitates*, *municipes*, *casteles* and *colonies*, as well as for external ones, as they became large units. administrative, where the prefects represented the local government of the first rank. They were independent in governing and administering dioceses, linked by common interests within the province, where they were equally represented.

Thus, the administrative government of Illyricum with four large dioceses, created the first administrative identity of a nature that was a form of *autonomous citizenship*, since with

the new organization the local prefects were directly represented in that of the province, where the main and second authority of the Empire was Caesar, who co-ruled with the Emperor of Rome.

From this point of view, in addition to the right to collect taxes, the imperial roads that passed through this part, which were the junctions connecting the West with the East (Via Egnatia, that of the Adriatic and the one connecting Dyrrah with Thessaloniki and Constantinople and others in many respects), was also the aspect of security, which made these parts even more important, since by protecting fortifications, participated directly in the strategic concept of the protection of the Empire.

Evidently, the *administrative identity* of Illyricum will soon gain even more weight, especially in the time of Constantine the Great, after the acceptance of Christianity. Since the ecclesiastical organization will be based on this organization, the Illyrian bishopric occupied one of the main places in the imperial ecclesiastical hierarchy, which also meant political and social power. Obviously, it will be the bishops from Illyricum and Dardania who from the first Council of Nicaea in 325 to that of the eighth of Constantinople, in 870, with religious jurisdiction not always following the administrative one, will see Illyricum remaining connected with the church of Rome, while administratively belonging to the East, that is, Constantinople. In the six centuries, this will set a “precedent” on which well-known East-West outlines of known dimensions will be clashing that will later go as far as those of clashes of civilizations.

The ecclesiastical and legal identity - in the Byzantine Empire also appears as a state identity not only because, thanks to the agreement with the church, the emperor represented the “God’s representative” on earth, but also because the church appeared as a true co-government on the imperial throne, but also in some important segments of local government when it also determined local authorities and their power in relation to the hierarchy of central government. Thus, the emperor and the church exercised common power in all spheres of life, in which the spiritual aspects of the church then had to direct those of consciousness, which in turn had to submit to Christian dogma to expression in social, intellectual and creative life.

With the ecclesiastical organization, the churches of Illyricum, most of them (with the exception of the diocese of Dyrrah) will belong to the Roman church. Initially, their center will be in Thessaloniki, so that in the time of Justinian I onwards this center, at the level of the vicariate, will pass to Prima Justiniana, remaining there for more than two and a half centuries, while, in the ninth century, will pass under the final supervision of Constantinople.

In accordance with this position, Justinian took special measures, among which one should mention the creation of a special diocese for the churches of Illyricum, separating it from the dependence of Thessaly. Next he built a magnificent city in which he erected an archbishopric with jurisdiction over all the churches of the Illyrian provinces. Its archbishop was also the vicar of the apostolic see of Rome. The institutionalization of this archdiocese took place on Novel XI on April 14, 535, located in the city named after him: “Prima Justiniana” which he expressly calls his birthplace or homeland.²⁹¹

Even before the capital of the church of Illyricum was transferred to Dardania taking the role of vicariate, in Illyricum and especially in Dardania, the church of this part, in the framework of known theological outlines and contradictions reflected in divisions within the church (*Arianism* and various doctrines for and against the *trinity*), will represent an important factor as a catalyst for the frequent extreme currents and confrontations. Notably, St. Paul will

²⁹¹ The real name of the location of this capital is “Prima Justiniana” which the Emperor clearly expresses in the text of Novelae XI which contains: “*Multis et varis modis nostram patriam augere ut... Prima Justinianae nostram patriam...*” But it is deformed by the contemporary historian Justinian, Procopius of Caesarea who in the work “*De aedificiis*” (On Constructions) provides historical data that Emperor Justinian built a magnificent city which he named “Justiniana prima”.

make his first apostolic journeys in the western part and there, after introducing the idea of the Christian gospel at the same time he will create the first ecclesiastical settlements in these parts. Also on these sides St. Jerome will appear with the first translation of the Bible into Latin (Vulgata) in 399, paving the way for the official formalization of Christianity, as will happen a little later by Emperor Constantine the Great coming from the Dardanian lands.

However, what can be called the last *ecclesiastical identity* coming from an organizational level, such as the one that Dardania gained by order of Emperor Justinian I, may be assessed as *part of a state identity* within the empire, as reflected not only in a spiritual aspect, with Justiniana Prima rising to the highest rank of direct connection with the Papacy of Rome, but also on a social and politics plain and more. Thus, during Justinian's time, the capital of the Illyrian archbishopric always had a material content, in addition to the construction and turning of Prima Justiniana to a magnificent city, similar to the other centers of Dardania from Naissus, which would to be rebuilt, and Ulpiana destroyed by the earthquake of 518 that will be named Justiniana Secunda and many other cities, to which should be added the erection of over a hundred castles across the country. Although dedicated to security issues, i.e. protecting the country from barbaric attacks, which were a great threat, especially those coming from the Goths, Avars and a little later Slavs, they will strengthen economic and social life of the country, turning it into a powerful center connecting the East with the West. The data of the time show that such a spiritual, social and political level conditioned the establishment and strengthening of a new military and local aristocratic class, which felt equal to that of the imperial elite.

The ecclesiastical identity of the Dardanian church in Illyricum related to the Roman one, although in the ninth century by order of Emperor Leo III it eventually passed under the jurisdiction of the eastern church, i.e. Constantinople, it will continue to remain part of a centuries-old ecclesiastical tradition that will also affect the emergence of the first Byzantine pre-state structures, such as those of the themes created in Durrës and Nicopolis.

The ecclesiastical identity in question, however, is also related to the legal and administrative one, with Justinian I aiming at realizing an imperial political East-West unity under a single power. He would then try to establish a single legislation throughout the empire to rule a single state right, as was the case with the promotion of the "*Codex Justinianus-Corpus Juris Civilis, Novel XI*".

CHRISTIANITY IN DARDANIA, MACEDONIA AND ILLYRICUM

Evidently, in Illyricum, where Dardania and Macedonia as provinces played an important role in self-governing structures, key processes will begin (the imperial reforms of Diocletian and Constantine the Great as well as the first barbarian penetrations from East to West), leading to the birth and later to the creation of Byzantium), and the same can be said for the emergence of Christianity. The most important test for its treatment gained in the fourth century by turning into an official faith of the Empire, Christianity will experience in this part, as the main roads connecting the East with the West and vice versa went across these lands, so vital both for the circulation of goods, of armies, and also of ideas.

Various records by ancient authors, as well as ecclesiastical sources, indicate that Christian missionaries appeared in the area of Illyria and Dardania as early as the first century AD. The author of the sixth century AD, Kosmas, includes the Illyrians in the group of

peoples who in his time had embraced Christianity.²⁹² From the first centuries AD, the first Christian communities are mentioned in the urban centers of these areas, and the first buildings of such a cult are erected.²⁹³

Ecclesiastical sources say that St. Paul first introduced sacred literature in Illyricum, such as the Christian Gospel, in Philippi, Macedonia. Then, traveling west, across the Egnatia road, he preached in Thessaloniki, and from then on, in 59 AD, for the first time, he will penetrate the heart of Illyricum. About this he says:

“From Jerusalem and around to Illyricum I spread the good news of Christ.”²⁹⁴

Yes, these were not the only records where St. Paul mentions Illyricum. Around 66 AD, he wrote to Titus how he had stayed in Nicopolis during the winter, in the most famous city of Epirus, as he puts it, in a place near Illyricum, which he called the “City of Victory”, which Augustus had founded in 31 BC, after defeating his opponent Anthony.²⁹⁵

Ecclesiastical records show that on this occasion St. Paul had founded in Durrah a Christian community, the first in these parts, during his sermons in Illyria and Epirus.²⁹⁶ It explains that at that time there were 70 Christian families in Durrah, whose bishop was a certain Caesar or Apollo.²⁹⁷

Sources from the Roman church say that the martyrdom of the bishop of Durrah, St. Asti, who was martyred by the emperor Trajan during his reign, was also of that time (98-117).²⁹⁸

The emergence of Christian emissaries, who will be proclaimed as saints, such as Paul and others, and a good presence of their supporters in Illyricum, is evidenced by the historian Pliny Junior, who in 111 and 113 AD ruled Bithynia and Pontus. Pliny writes that the “epidemic of this deception”, as Christianity calls it, “involved not only cities but also the villages”.²⁹⁹

The presence of religious cults in the “*center of the world*” (*in medio mundi constitutae*) as Illyricum was then called by many authors,³⁰⁰ we also find at Tertullian (200-206) when he talks about the universal spread of Christianity among the Thracians and their neighbors, which suggests that the word was also used for the Dardanians, who at that time lived in a common province with them in that of the Superior Moesia, where according to ancient sources they supervised the roads connecting the East with the West.

The importance of Dardania as a center where from the end of the first century AD and the beginning of the second the idea of Christianity will greatly spread speak also two Dardanian saints, Florus and Laurus, who ended up as martyrs in Ulpiana.

Although the exact time of their martyrdom is not known, indirect sources relate it to the beginning of the second century BC, as ecclesiastical records confirm that the teachers of Florus and Laurus, Pocolis and Maximus, will be subject to torture during the time of Emperor Hadrian (117-138), it may be assumed that their students will also suffer somewhere close to their teachers.³⁰¹

That the influence of Christianity in Dardania of Illyricum was on the rise, and it was no coincidence that martyrdom had taken off there, can also be understood by the well-known missionaries who would be proclaimed saints in these parts. The first of these is Gregory of Nish, born in 344. He is followed by St. Jerome (Hieronymus), born in 347 in Stridom, on the

²⁹² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tirana, 2002, p. 200.

²⁹³ Idem, p. 20.

²⁹⁴ Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skoposko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb, 1986, p. 21.

²⁹⁵ Idem, p. 21.

²⁹⁶ See Farlati: “*Illyricum Sacrum*”, I, 254; VIII, I.

²⁹⁷ Idem.

²⁹⁸ Jacques, Edwin: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 159.

²⁹⁹ Idem, p. 21.

³⁰⁰ Irenaeus, Lugdunen: “*Contra haereses*”, Book I, cap. 10, PG 7 553/4.

³⁰¹ *Acta Sanctorum*, die 18 Augusti, III, Antverpiae 1737, 520-522, cited according to Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skoposko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb 1986, p. 23.

northern border of Dalmatia, then Arius, writer and bishop of the city of Amazah in Asia Minor, who came from these regions.

Among all the saints of Illyricum and Dardania, who unequivocally represents one of the most prominent church fathers and theologians, is St. Jerome, called Hieronymus (347-420). Among other things, he is particularly remembered for his translation of the Bible, known as the *Latin Vulgate*.³⁰²

That the issue of saints and martyrs in Illyria and Dardania was not out of the deepest sensitivity to Christianity is evidenced by a number of place names referring to the first Eastern martyrs, whose cult was widespread in the IV-VI centuries. Such are the toponyms *Shirgj* (St. Serge), *Shumbak* (St. Bak), *Shëndekla* (St. Teka), *Shën Vlashi*, which is found in Shkodër, Durrës and down to Çamëria, *Shnanou* (St. Andrew) Gjakovë, *Shijaku* (St. Jack) etc.³⁰³

Even before the great missionary work of St. Jerome, who translated the Old Testament into Latin introducing it to the Western world for the first time with its content, the existence of Christianity in Illyricum and Dardania with the presence of its bishops at the Council of Nicaea, in 325, as convened by the emperor Constantine the Great. In the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, of the 318 bishops represented by the whole Empire, 3 were from Illyricum, two of whom came from Dardania and one from Illyricum. The ones from Dardania were the Bishop of Scupi (today's Skopje) Dacus or "*Dacus Daradaniae*" and Bishop Budius of Stobi (today's Stip in Macedonia) and from Illyricum was the Bishop of Korkyra (Corfu). It seems that the bishop of Stobi Budius was under the supervision of Dacus of Dardania, which speaks of the extension of the church of Dardania to the parts of Macedonia,³⁰⁴ This extension will be proved in these later ecclesiastical organizations as well. On this occasion, Charnakus claims that in 325, in Illyricum, the ecclesiastical centers were present in Nicopolis, Buthrotum (Butrint) and Korkyra (Corfu).³⁰⁵

At the same time, Christian toponyms of the type *Shëngjin*, *Shupal* (St. Paul), *Shmil* (St. Michael), *Shën Koll* or *Shën Nik* (St. Nicholas), *Shëndill* (St. Ilia) *Shëngjergj*, *Shtish* (St. Matish) are included in the toponymy of the country, etc.³⁰⁶

After the recognition of Christianity as the faith of the Empire made by Emperor Constantine the Great, Christianity in Illyricum gained momentum as it was organized on the basis of the administrative provinces of the Diocletian era. Thus, in the center of each province was the metropolitan church, where archbishop's headquarters were. Under the jurisdiction of the latter were the bishops of the subordinate (suffragan) dioceses. In the main centers of Illyricum were the archdiocese of Shkodra (Prevalitana), Scupi (Dardania), Durrës (New Epirus) and Nicopolis (Old Epirus). The Archbishop of Shkodra had 3 subordinate dioceses under his subordination; Scupi had 5, Durrës 8 and Nicopolis 9 dioceses.³⁰⁷

As part of this organization in the provinces, the archbishop summoned the provincial synod. The archbishops attended ecumenical councils, such as the first in Nicaea, attended by the Metropolitan of Durrës. While in the Council of Chalcedon of 451, when the dogmatic quarrels over the nature of Christ were finally resolved, Lluca - Metropolitan of Durrës, Evendri - bishop of Diocletian and Euzebio - bishop of Apollonia took part.³⁰⁸

The ecclesiastical organization in Illyricum shared the difficulties of the general organization of the church in the Empire from permission in the 4th century by Constantine

³⁰² Jacques, Edwin: "*Shqiptarët*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 170.

³⁰³ "*Historia e Popullit shqiptar*", First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 200.

³⁰⁴ Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1986, p. 29.

³⁰⁵ Jacques, Edwin: "*Shqiptarët*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 163.

³⁰⁶ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 201.

³⁰⁷ Idem, p. 201.

³⁰⁸ Idem, p. 202.

the Great to the Council of Chalcedon when dogma on the nature of Christ and thought peace and domination would prevail in the ecclesiastical interior. However, with Illyricum located in the most strategic part of the Empire, that is, in what divided the East with the West, and where the nodes of all known political, social, cultural, and religious outlines were located, it was natural for all the outlines and crises in particular to be reflected in it. Thus, it was no coincidence that the first and strongest confrontation between Rome and Constantinople over ecclesiastical hegemony began over this part, and that this was highlighted by the second and third councils to culminate especially during the so-called “Acacian Crisis” (484-519), when the bishops of Illyricum confirmed their allegiance to Rome. Particularly determined to communicate with the Pope were the provincial clergy of Dardania, Old Epirus, and Prevalitana.

In fact, this crisis resulted in an ongoing political crisis between the centers: Rome and Constantinople, where each fought for primacy, although with the Council of Chalcedon of 451, under its canon 28 it had equated the bishops of Rome with the one of Constantinople, so they were equal. Pope Leo did not want to accept that canon, which he rejected, not on political superiority of Rome, but on St. Peter’s religious superiority. This led him to be followed by the bishops of Illyricum with those of Dardania, who in their support had a decision of the last council, which placed the eastern dioceses under the dependence of the Patriarch of Constantinople, though granting no authority to him over Illyricum.

In these circumstances, it will again be the political movements at the imperial head that will affect the ecclesiastical orders, by which the unity of the Illyrian bishoprics will be broken in order to preserve the Roman affiliation. It was the bishopric of Durrah that began to lean towards Constantinople for the sole reason that Emperor Anastasius I (491-518) descended from Durrah, which had an impact on him to reflect on the eastern church.

To these religious confrontations of an imperial nature, that is, first of those with Arianism and later also between the “*dyophysites*” (dual nature) and the “*monophysites*” (God man), will, of course, be shaped by the organization of the church itself that would follow the administrative division of the provinces which had been made according to the model, first by Diocletian, and then by Constantine the Great. According to this, Illyricum was divided into two parts: that of the West under the leadership of “*praefecturae pr. Italy, Africae et Illyrie*” and of the East, with its own prefect “*praefectus pr. Illyrici*”. To the eastern Illyricum, which included the dioceses of Dardania and that of Macedonia, Emperor Gracian in 379 left it to the co-governor Theodosius. The western part of Illyricum, a little later, in 423 and 437, joined the Eastern Empire.

This division was not acceptable for Pope Boniface, who immediately demanded from Honorius, who ruled the western part of the Empire, that the church of Illyricum be returned to Rome. Honorius wrote a letter to Theodosius requesting the Holy See “*sanetae sedis apostolicae desideria*”. Theodosius accepted this request and issued a decree according to which the prefect of Illyricum was ordered to maintain the old order “*aniquom orderi specialty faciant custodiri*”.³⁰⁹

This situation, with all the provinces of eastern Illyricum being not only independent and connected with the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, would continue until the middle of the ninth century. This, however, does not mean that there will be no attempt to deprive them of Western church affiliation, such as those of the Archbishop of Constantinople, Anatolius, when he writes to the bishops of the eastern province of Illyricum to consent to canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon of 451 by which the seat of Constantinople was given priority. The

³⁰⁹ On the disputed correspondence issues between Bonifacio and Honoris in more detail see: “*Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae actatis illustration, colleg*”. Thalloczy L.-Jericek C.-Sufflay E, vol. I, Vindibonae MCMXIII, 2 no. 9-10.

letter of Pope Leo acknowledges that the bishops of Illyricum will reject the request of Patriarch Anatolius.³¹⁰

In the context of these ecclesiastical outlines, which have also influenced social and political life, the role of the Diocese of Dardania should be seen as one of the initiators of ecclesiastical organization in what will be included in the Illyrian by Emperor Diocletian Empire as an independent province of particular importance.

In fact, the *Illyrian term* of an administrative nature that will be formalized in the time of Diocletian and accepted by Constantine the Great to remain so even during the time of Byzantium, is also of a *political nature*. For the first time, the vast Illyrian space, which for a long time meant an ethnographic geography, i.e. the space of Illyrian tribes, despite the fact that some of them were once independent kingdoms, though without any internal political connection, gains the attributes of a whole independent imperial entirety with a certain ethnic identity. Therefore, it was only natural that in accordance with this concept, the ecclesiastical organization of Dardania should occur at the level of an episcopate. That this was so is proved by the Council of Nicaea of 325, summoned by Emperor Constantine the Great, when among the 318 delegates to the council, including among others Hosius of Corduba, Nicholas of Smyrna and Anastasius, also the bishop of Dardania, Dacus, attended signed as “*Dacus Dardaniae*”.³¹¹

Although there is no official information about the exact time of the founding of the Dardanian bishopric, however, the Council of Nicaea states that with the participation of Bishop Dacus, signed “*Dacus Dardaniae*”, Dardania had its own bishopric, which Budis Stobi of Macedonia was also subject to. At the second council in Sardinia, on the border of the two parts of the Empire in 342, the bishopric of Dardania will be represented by Bishop Gaudentius of Naissus (modern-day Nish), who also attended on behalf of the bishops of Illyricum. He will become famous for his proposal of canon 5 about the competencies of the Holy See regarding the appointment of bishops, which will be supported by the Metropolitan of Dardania, who in the document of the Council will be signed as “*Paregorius a Dardania de Scupis*” (*Progorius of Scupi from Dardania*).³¹²

The Diocese of Dardania, as an important ecclesiastical center, is also mentioned on the occasion of the arrival to the province of Eustachius, bishop of Sebes, who by the decision of the council of Constantinople in 360 was forced to migrate to those countries. Bishop Eustachius was a well-known supporter of Arianism, and his exile “as a punishment” in Dardania was also based on the support that this movement enjoyed in these parts, and due to this some of the Dardanian bishops will be held accountable in the council of Chalcedon in 451 accused of having supported “schism”, thus achieving the well-known stance against Arianism.

The bishops as well as the diocese of Dardania will continue to be involved in many of the hot ecclesiastical issues dealing with the “two churches” which will affect the imperial political life. One of these was the “Three Heads” (*Tria Capitula*), which will include the Constantinople Council. All the bishops of Dardania were present: Foca of Stobi, representing the archbishop of Justina Prima, Benenatis, Sabian of Zapora, Projectus of Naissus (today's Nish) and Paul, bishop of Justiniana Secunda (former Ulpiana), who, with the exception of Benenatis and Foca, will sign the Pope Virgil's “*Constitutum*”.

However, the diocese of Dardania was originally connected with the church of Thessalonica (modern-day Thessaloniki). This large and important city of the Empire will gain even more weight after the administrative reforms by Diocletian and Constantine the

³¹⁰ Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb, 1986, p. 35.

³¹¹ Idem.

³¹² Farlatus D: “*Iliricum Sacrum*”, VIII, 4, cited according to Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb, 1986.

Great when he was appointed to the seat of the prefect of Illyricum. Thus, the bishops of Thessaloniki earned the title of Pope's vicars for that part, which was a great but also significant obligation for them, knowing that the boundary between the eastern and western parts of the Empire was removed, which marked also the boundary between the Church of Rome and that of Constantinople. The vicariate, as a way of delegating primary power in the space of one or several provinces was known in ecclesiastical organization since the beginning of the 5th century. The first Vicariate was that of the Church of Thessaloniki, while vicariates will also appear at the Arlesian Church, that of Justiniana Prima and two in Spain.

The importance that the church of Dardania will gain, however, has to do with its position on supporting the Church of Rome, an attitude which this part of Illyricum always represented for a necessary balance between East and West, i.e. between the two parts of the Empire, which had taken different paths due to well-known ecclesiastical divergences, as well as actions taken by Emperor Justinian I to give this province the weight of one of the key provinces of the Empire in the internal connection of Illyricum as part of the West.³¹³

Although this would turn out as a great burden and even revengeful, Dardania during the reign of Justinian I (527-565) from an ecclesiastical, social and political point of view, became an important center of Byzantium.

Thus, it should be pointed out that in the time of Justinian I, who came from Dardania, a successful era began in the ecclesiastical life of Dardania, among the most successful it had in its history. The emperor, in the framework of the reorganization of the Illyrian churches, established an independent ecclesiastical province, granting to it a special role in this part of the Empire. .. At the time, from an ecclesiastical point of view, Eastern Illyricum represented a whole. By the decision of the Emperor it was divided into two parts, independent and with separate centers. The center of the southern part remained in Thessaloniki, while in the newly formed province, the new center of Illyricum, became Prima Justiniana. The emperor, therefore, had a clear intention to raise his birthplace to a new administrative center, which was seen with the transfer of the prefecture center from Thessaloniki.³¹⁴

To this end, on April 14, 535 AD, Emperor Justinian proclaimed *Novellae XI* by which he established the vicarage for that part of the Empire. The new exarchate included the following provinces: Dacia Mediterana, Dacia Ripensis, Mysia Prima, Dardania, Macedonia Secunda, part of Pannonia Secunda which was in Baciensi civitate. When it all comes down to today's geographical aspects, it turns out that Prima Justiniana brought under its control the provinces that include present-day Serbia, eastern Srem, Western Bulgaria, northern Macedonia, Dardania, and Montenegro. Ten years later, with the *Novellae CXXXI*, the emperor issued a decree legally sanctioning the legal status of Prima Justiniana.³¹⁵

According to the emperor's decree, the new province had the character of an independent ecclesiastical province, extending its reach to the maximum. The bishop of Prima Justiniana not only carried the title of metropolitan (that title was also held by the bishop of ruined Scupi), that is, he represented the highest rank of the ecclesiastical organization in the new province. He also carried the title of archbishop, or of the highest instance in the province, to whose authority several provinces will be subject. To the young archbishop belonged "*summus honore, summa dignitas, summum sacerdotium, summum fastigium*" (the greatest honor, the greatest dignity, the greatest title, the greatest degree).³¹⁶

These high titles were more than honorary titles, but also had a certain legal force, according to which the archbishop of Prima Justiniana directed the bishops of his province,

³¹³ The true name of Emperor Justinian is *Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Justinianus*, or *Anicus Julianus Justinianus* (See: Diehle, Ch: "*Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI-e siècle*", Paris 1901.)

³¹⁴ Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrensaka biScupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1968, p. 41.

³¹⁵ Idem, p. 42.

³¹⁶ Idem, p. 42.

and he was at the same time the direct representative of the bishop of Rome in this part. From that time on, neither he nor his bishops will depend on the bishopric of Thessaloniki for anything. Also, the archbishop of Prima Justiniana, as the first of the diocese, convenes and directs the Provincial Councils. He makes the final decisions about all the reviews and disagreements that arise between the bishops. The new archbishop is elected by all the metropolitans and bishops in the joint council, without the need to discuss this with the bishop of Thessaloniki.³¹⁷

It's worth noting that the written language and all the decrees of Prima Justiniana were Latin. Many of the archeological materials of the time, including Justinian's monograms from the found basilićas, are written in Latin, indicating that both the language of the liturgy and the ecclesiastical administration were written in this language and not in Greek. Even the names of Prima Justiniana's founders (Catellianus, Benenatus, Johanes, and others) testify to the Latin linguistic sphere in these parts, connected in every sense with the West.

Although the exact location of Prima Justiniana is not yet known, the excavations carried out near today's Skopje, and also in the surrounding areas, especially in the direction of Prishtina, make this city one of the most important in Dardania and also on the eastern part of Illyricum, located near Skopje, in the north gorge of Lepenc in the village of Zllakućan. A considerable number of exhibits of the time have been found there, including a basilića from the time of early Christianity. Since this ubiquity of Prima Justiniana is related to that of ancient Scupi ruined in the severe earthquake of 518, then it is quite reasonable that Emperor Justinian decided to build the city nearby, moving it further north, to the edge of the river Lepenc, where even further it continued to be at the important crossroads of the Naissus-Scupi-Thessaloniki roads, connecting with the Aegean, while in the north with the Singidunum, and the west with the Adriatic through Ulpiana and Lissus (present-day Lezha).

The destruction of ancient Scupi and the rebuilding of Prima Justiniana, which in Justinian's time will become the capital of the Illyrian episcopate and an important center of the Empire, did not interrupt the ecclesiastical continuity of the Scup diocese or ecclesiastical life in Dardania, which had an almost two-century tradition.³¹⁸ However, in addition to Scupi, ancient authors also mention other Christian dioceses in Dardania. Hierocles, in addition to Scupi, also marks Ulpiana as an ecclesiastical center.³¹⁹

The ancient city of Ulpiana was located north of the ancient Scup in central Dardania. Archaeological excavations have shown that the city was located ten kilometers south of Prishtina, near present-day Graćanica.

St. Anastasia mentions Ulpiana as an important city in 343. The great city "*urgus splendidissima*" in 380 will be visited by Emperor Theodosius I, on his way from Sirminium to Thessaloniki.³²⁰

According to Jordan's records, in 472, Ulpiana was conquered by the son of the Gothic king Tiudimer Theodoric, who after conquering Naissus with 3,000 warriors turned to this city, which suffered damage during this time as most of the country affected by Theodoric's army.

Ulpiana, as well as other parts of Dardania, in particular Scupi suffered from a great earthquake in 518. Emperor Justinian rebuilt Ulpiana and named it Justiniana Secunda.

In the ecclesiastical sense, Ulpiana must have been an important center, since the first Dardanian martyrs Floris and Laurus came from this country, but Ulpiana is also known as the birthplace of the monophysite bishop Gergentis, who served as bishop in Safara of the

³¹⁷ Idem, p. 42.

³¹⁸ The first data on the first Dardanian Diocese in Scupi are provided by Ptolemy (see: Ptolomeaeus III 9/4, Bekkerus I), which are confirmed also by Procop (see: Procop, Caesar, *De Aedificiis* IV I) and Hierocles (see: Hierocles, Synecdemus: *Provincia Dardaniae sub presime, urues 3: Scupom metropolis*. Merion "Ulpiana", rec. Bekkerus I Bonnae 1844).

³¹⁹ Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1986, p. 51.

³²⁰ Idem, p. 51.

Black Sea. According to church records, Ulpiana is known as a bishopric in the 4th century. At the Council of Sardice, in 342, its representatives attended, signing the assembly acts as “*Machedonius a Dardania de Ulpiana*”.³²¹

In Synod’s letter sent to Emperor Leo in 458 by the bishops of Dardania Ursilius, and that of Dalmatia Maximus, we learn that there are two Episcopal centers in Dardania: Nentiana and Diocletiana,³²² where many Christian missionaries operated, among whom a most important one is St. Niketë or Niketë Dardani, who together with his friend Paulian from Nolea ranked among the church fathers.

We learn about Niketë from his friend Paulian, who was twice in Rome with St. Niketë, in 398 and 402. St. Niketë left behind many theological works and reviews of this nature, some of which are preserved entirely and some in part. But, from the above-mentioned sources it appears that St. Niketë or Niketë Dardani was born around 340 in Remesiana of Dardania. At that time, this prosperous, Episcopal-based center was officially included within the borders of the province of Dacia Mediterane. There are no rough announcements about the family, the minor’s age and Niketë’s youth. They come with his maturity, as happens with other prominent people whose age is only known, and especially the end of their tale. For the first time, Niketë Dardani is mentioned in 366 in a letter by Germain of Serminium, where he is included in the list of bishops of that province, revealing that Niketë Dardani, at the age of 26, was a bishop of Remisiana.³²³

In addition to the activity required by the Episcopal office, Niketë Dardani also focused on research and creative work. Although in those circumstances the creative activity of the artists was not easy, Niketë Dardani, equipped with literary and musical tendencies, compiled songs and hymns and taught the believers to sing them together.

What makes St. Niketë or Niketë Dardani famous is the celebrated anthem “*Te Deum laudamus*” and the treatise “*De psalmodiae bono*”. The work “*Te Deum Laudamos*” is one of the most famous and widespread hymns around the world. This hymn of praise, spread in Western Europe as early as 523, came about through early manuscripts in four variants with minor variations: a) Milanese, b) Mozarabic (Spanish), c) Irish and d) Galician. In addition to these variants, a biam involved in “*Graduale vaticano*” with melodies carried a quartet above is known.³²⁴

In addition to the anthem “*Te Deum*”, Niketë Dardani composed other songs as well as indicated by indirect data. He appears as the author, although in some places it is attributed to St. Ambrose, though later confirmed that the only author of the anthem is St. Niketas from Dardania.³²⁵

This shows the importance of the church of Dardania at the time of the great ecclesiastical clashes for political and spiritual domination between East and West, but also of the devotion of bishops and saints to directly contribute to its spiritual identity with their artistic creations, such as that of St. Niketa in music, but also many others in other fields of creativity, especially in the plastic arts from icons and reliefs to monumental mosaics of decorations of sacred and public objects throughout the empire.

Here, however, we must not forget the great contribution in the field of jurisdiction, such as that of the emperor Justinian I and his famous codices, sanctioning the Roman law, which continues to this day to serve as an irreplaceable legal model.

³²¹ For more on St. Niketa as author of the Byzantine hymn see: Ramadan Sokoli: “16 shekuj”, Eurorilindja, Tiranë, 1996, pp. 29-49.

³²² Farlatus identifies these bishoprics as Naissus and Ducea (see: Farlatus, D-Coletus: “Illyricum Sacrum”, VIII, 5, Venetiis, 1751-1819).

³²³ Sokoli, Ramadan: “16 shekuj”, Tiranë, 1996, p. 12.

³²⁴ Sokoli, Ramadan: “16 shekuj”, Tiranë, 1996, p. 46.

³²⁵ Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb 1986, p. 58.

Since the spiritual identity in the Byzantine Empire was part of the state identity, as well as a political one, it is still worth mentioning the bearers who helped this reconstruction as well as the institutions designated by dioceses, bishoprics, vicariates and even the prefecture's capital of Illyria, such as that which was proclaimed by Emperor Justinian, in 535, by means of Novellae XI, as it should be pointed out the political and social realities that produced this condition, viewed in the context of the imperial outlines of the time which will be discussed later.

Of course, these reports cannot be properly explained or reflected in accordance with their importance outside the official ecclesiastical relations, as only there can they be confirmed as such. Even the emperor's decisions, no matter how religious, were to be confirmed by the archbishop of Constantinople (if dealing with the eastern province) and by the Pope, that is, the Holy See of Rome (if had to do with its part of jurisdiction). In this regard, the documents related to the decrees and letters addressed to the Church of Dardania and to the bishops by the Pope and the Holy See, as well as by emperors, and the letters the bishops of Dardania addressed to the Holy See and the emperor himself are of interest. Because, they show not only the relations between the church of Dardania and the Holy See to be better understood, but also those of the emperors with this church itself and its leaders, which was at the highest level, and help the understanding over the assessment that the strengthening and erection of the church of Dardania to such a level by Justinian I was part of the concept that Dardania, as well as the whole of Illyricum, become central factors of the Byzantine Empire, with which its two wings would be held.

From this point of view, some of the preserved letters that the papacy sent to the bishops of Illyricum and Dardania indicate the high position of this church and the role it played in many of the outlines, starting with *Arianism* (carried from the First Council of Nicaea of 325 to the third Council of Chalcedon of 451), the fierce quarrels over the *dyophysitists* and *monophysitists* to the question of the "three heads" and the like, where the bishops of Dardania and those of Illyricum always appear at the center of these struggles. They have also influenced the decisions of the councils, raising issues preoccupying the highest church leaders as well as the emperors themselves. Of this nature, however, are the letters of Pope Celestine I, who in 424 addressed the nine bishops, presumably the head of the ecclesiastical provinces, which is also that of the church of Dardania, ordering him to submit to Rufus, the bishop of Thessaloniki, who was General Vicar.³²⁶

Earlier, Pope Innocent I will address the Dardanian bishops with the same appeal through the circular "*Magna me gratulatio*", calling for a firm stance against heretics and heresy, as manifested by the actions of the Bishop of Naissus, Bonosus.

That the issue of the heretics will continue to disturb the Holy See is also shown in the letter that Pope Gelasius addressed to the bishops of Dardania in 493. It bears the title "*Ubi primum*" and asks loyalty to the Holy See and its teachings. The same message can be used to describe what the same Pope sent a year later, entitled "*Audientes orthodoxam*", addressing all bishops of Dardania: "*Universis episcopis per Dardaniam sive per Illyricum constitutes.*"

Here, too, Pope Gelasius I urges them to stay away from "Euthy's delusions" and not to rely on the bishop of Thessaloniki, who has not responded to the request for the trial of Acacius.³²⁷

Pope Gelasius I will also send two letters to the Church of Dardania, in which he constantly reminds the obligations to the Holy See and its attitudes in relation to the issues concerning East and West in the circumstances of the concerns brought by the barbaric attacks in the east and efforts to "soften" them through various alliances with them, such as

³²⁶ Idem, p. 61.

³²⁷ Idem, p. 62.

those with the Goths, Visigoths, or Huns, who will move on to become part of internal affairs of the Empire, especially as they will be used to settle accounts between internal rivalries.

Of the same nature is the letter of Pope Symmachus from the year 512 addressed to all bishops, deacons, archimandrites and church leaders in Illyricum, Dardania and the two Dacias.

After the appearance of Prima Justiniana to the rank of vicariate and as ecclesiastical capital of the province of Illyricum, the Holy See will repeatedly address the leaders of this center bearing the main authority after the Holy See. Thus, Pope Gregory the Great in 592 addressed the vicar of Prima Justiniana with the letter "*Post longas*", and in 594 addressing him with another letter "*Manifestum bonitatis*". In a letter, the same Pope addressed the Vicar of Dardania in 599, asking him not to submit to the church of Constantinople, but to respect the early decisions, that is, those brought by Emperor Justinian I, which were still valid. Pope Gregory's last letter to Prima Justiniana's vicar is dated 602. It calls for measures to be taken in the Skodra metropolis following the quarrels taking place between Metropolitan Constantine and Bishop Nemison. This shows the great powers that Prima Justiniana had throughout Illyricum.

Of particular importance are the letters the emperors sent to the diocese of Dardania. Through them, the high level that it enjoyed for a long time in the spiritual and administrative hierarchy of the Empire is highlighted. Thus, the first letter of this nature is that of Emperor Leo I Augustus, with imperial views on two issues: the first concerns the actions of Bishop Timothy Aelurus himself, to take over the leadership of the diocese of Alexandria after the death of Bishop Proterius, in which case his disagreement with this action appears and adequate sanctions are required. And the second concerns the Council of Chalcedon, after the emperor sought the views of all the bishops on the issues raised there.³²⁸

Two letters in the form of decrees to the bishopric of Dardania will also be sent to him by Emperor Justinian I, which raise him to the highest position as the ecclesiastical capital of Illyricum. It is about Novellae XI of 535 and the Novellae CXXXI of 545, which gave it the status of archbishopric and vicariate defining "*secundum ea quae definita sunt a sanctissimo Papa Virgilio*" as sanctioned by Pope Virgilio.

Finally, the high relations of the church of Dardania with the papacy and the Empire are complemented by the letters that the bishops sent to them. However, they go beyond ecclesiastical issues, as do those of a social and political nature, characteristic of the well-known and unknown relations between East and West.

These letters as well as the relations between the church of Dardania and the Holy See on the one hand and those with the emperors, on the other, will continue for two centuries, in which case this episcopate and the rest of Illyricum, with the exception of that of Durrës and some others, remain on the side of the western church, that is, of Rome, meaning western definition even in the circumstances of the eastern administration. Evidently, this not-so-natural situation, with eastern administration under Constantinople and Western ecclesiastical affiliation with Rome, ended with an arbitrary decision by Emperor Leo III, who in 733 severed Eastern Illyricum and many provinces of others from the church of Rome to submit to the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople.

Rome's attempt to maintain its jurisdiction under the Bulgarian occupation, which had penetrated some old Illyrian provinces, did not bear fruit. Thus, at the 8th Congress in Constantinople (869-870), despite the objections of the Pope's legates, it was decided that all parts of Illyricum, under Bulgarian occupation, should remain under the patriarchate of Constantinople. The term "Illyricum" will be mentioned there for the last time.³²⁹

³²⁸ Idem, p. 64.

³²⁹ See: Manna, S: "*L' Ilirico e i suoi problemi*" (Oriente Cristiano, a. XVIII, nr. 4, Palermo, 1978 – 64), cited according to Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skoposko-prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb 1986, p. 66.

By this decision, that is, when Dardania will be taken over by the episcopate and the capital of the vicariate that it enjoyed from Justinian I onwards, at the same time ends what can be called a self-governing identity with elements of Illyrian-Dardanian citizenship with a continuity of six centuries (284-870). This situation, ignored or even overlooked by history, began with the reforms of the Illyrian-born Diocletian emperor, when he promoted Illyricum as a separate part of the Eastern Empire, to continue with those of Emperor Constantine the Great of Dardanian descent, to become concluded with those of Dardanian Justinian when Justiniana Prima becomes the second ecclesiastical center, after that of the Holy See. Since, under the circumstances of the imperial hierarchy, the church was a co-participant in administrative and political power and the emperor was at the same time the crown of double-headed power, then it can be said that the Dardanian state had its origins in Justinian's time to continue as such for two and half centuries when it will be extinguished by Eastern Byzantium and the Bulgarian invaders.

DARDANIA, MACEDONIA AND BYZANTIUM

Conclusively, with the reforms of Emperor Diocletian and those of Constantine the Great the concept of Illyria as ethno genesis, which in the memory of the Romans was taken by the Greeks sometime in the 4th century BC and as such had functioned until the fourth century AD, that is, until an Illyrian emperor (Diocletian) through radical reforms would change the character of the Roman Empire turning Illyricum into the main eastern province. It can also be said that there will be another Dardanian emperor, Justinian I, who will restore its ecclesiastical identity to the central part of Illyricum - Dardania, after its return to an ecclesiastical center of Illyricum as a vicariate directly connected with the Holy See, and, thus, political and administrative identity, among the most powerful and among the most important, remaining so for the next three centuries till Byzantium destroys it, beginning with the well-known struggles of The Eastern Empire in the long wars with itself (primarily with the unconstitutional factors Bulgarians and Slavs), but also with those from outside, which led to its end.

Emperor Justinian I, who managed to turn Dardania and with it Illyricum into a spiritual center of the eastern part of the Empire, did so being guided by the vision of restoring to the ancient Roman Empire the power and glory of universal proportions. He also needed the power of ecumenical Christianity, a power that was likely to be promoted in a highly strategic space, precisely where since antiquity it had introduced the knot of worldly ties where the foundations of mighty Troy rested, as an example of world civilization, where the Dardanians, as its founders, as backed by many ancient sources and supported by legends, appear among the important actors. They will take part in its development and protection until the last moment, remaining the only ones to turn its end into another continuum in time and space, which will be followed in the direction of Epirus and from thence to the south of Italy, where the Dardanian tribes (Galabret, Thunates, Daunes and others), without excluding the Etruscans (Tyrrhenians), whom many ancient sources claim to have passed from Asia Minor to Italy, founded Rome.

Under the new circumstances, the last Roman emperor on the Byzantine throne, at the same time a Christian sovereign, aware of the divine origin of his imperial authority, did his best to restore the former glory to the Roman Empire. But not only that. Justinian, although

briefly restoring the space it had, and, above all, the idea of a universal Empire, now with the help of Christianity, showed it as possible.

The question is how he managed this great historical turn, when the old Roman empire once again revealed all its power and experienced the last moments of its greatness in political, cultural and spiritual terms, a turn that then, in a different civilization direction, quite the opposite, will pave the way for the Middle Ages, precisely to that which due to despotism, disunity, intrigue, and all sorts of power struggles known as Byzantinism, as an imperial concept of universal proportions became a bad governing policy.

To better understand all this, of course, the political and social circumstances themselves, established in the transitional period of more than two centuries when well-known crises, such as that of the slave-owning system, vegetate into general imperial social crises. Those crises will not be met with appropriate answers, while from the first century AD onwards, as an alternative, Christian monotheism will be presented as an alternative to polytheism with the formula of spiritual life and equality “for the suffering”, an appealing promise to the general public and all those who in the slave-owning system felt exploited and hoped that the injustices of this world could be compensated for by the eternal life of the next world. Add to this the difficulties that will be posed to the Empire in the North and East by the attacks of the barbarians, first the Goths, the Huns, and later the Slavs, then it becomes more than clear why the Roman Empire was facing the challenge of failure. Failure could be avoided or postponed only by changing the basic concepts on which it was launched and raised, so as to suit the circumstances of the time such as leaving the slave-owning system and finding common ground with Christianity in the prevailing spread that relied on the triumph of monotheism over polytheism.

Obviously, this historical transcendence will be aided by the administrative, political, social, and military reforms of the emperors of Illyrian and Dardanian descent: Diocletian and Constantine the Great, especially the latter, when he accepted Christianity as the state religion of the Empire. However, they will not be able to prevent the abyss to which it headed, as it was being held hostage to the past that allowed for no radical turn (the abolition of the slave-owning order would be followed by the serfdom), just as Christianity did not allow extreme civil war a very harsh clash over dogma (Arianism, that of Dyophysites and Monophysites and others), that the universal concept of the Empire might also acquire the spiritual one.

At the time of these great upheavals, it was Justinian who restored the old empire to its former glory, restoring it to Christianity as a powerful tool. Although undoubtedly Christianity found in Justinian a protector but also a leader, nevertheless, Justinian remained essentially a Roman, and the idea of the autonomy of the religious sphere was entirely foreign to him. This attitude is best reflected in the fact that Justinian considered the popes and patriarchs to be his servants. As he ran the affairs of the state, he also directed the affairs of the church, personally intervening in every problem concerning the ecclesiastical organization, giving himself the right to decide even on dogmatic and liturgical matters, conducting concisely, writing theological treatises and church hymns.³³⁰

Suffice it to mention here his *Novellae* (XI and CXXXI) by which he first proclaimed Prima Justiniana (his birthplace) Archbishopric of Illyricum and then raised it to the level of a vicariate directly connected with the Holy See.

Of this nature are also his well-known views on Arianism, Monophysitism, and other theological issues, which charged most with ecclesiastical life whenever they were not given a definite answer where they originated before they turned into political matters. Therefore, in the context of the history of relations between the state and the church, the Justinian era constitutes the moment of the greatest influence of imperial power in ecclesiastical life, and

³³⁰ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 47.

no other emperor before or after him had such an unlimited power over the church as there was no emperor like him who tried to subject the church life to the concept of the universal Empire.³³¹

Although, ultimately, Emperor Justinian failed to do so, he showed that the universal concept was possible if the boundaries of behavior were also set for the church, though it was invoked in the word “creator” and in his boundless power.

In addition to his superior attitude toward the church and its internal issues, which were also reflected in imperial social and political life, Justinian would initially face barbaric invasions as well as the difficulties brought about by the penetrations from the East when his predecessors (Valentian and others), unable to stop them, not only did they make room for them, but they also began to use them for certain political purposes. This was the case with the Goths, who after the battle of Adrianople were allowed to settle in Thrace and some of them in Pannonia and Western Illyricum, from where they would continue their attacks against Italy.

Indeed, when Justinian came to power, the situation in the eastern part of the Empire, especially on its northern and eastern borders, was almost beyond any control, because on the one hand the barbarians, who had entered deeply into those parts and alongside destruction they had even begun to settle down, continuing to behave beyond any law, while on the other hand the Persians were constantly trying to appropriate the extreme provinces on the frontier, especially those who had begun to lose faith in the Empire. The situation was not much better in the west either, especially in Illyricum, where the Germans had begun to settle and penetrate in the direction of Italy and Spain without any difficulty putting their power out of imperial supervision. Thus the weakened part of the Roman Empire had already in many parts begun to accept the power of the barbarians, while the Germans had also become important military factors not only as regular troops, but also on the command hierarchy.

Despite these great troubles threatening to destroy the Empire in both its parts, especially the western one, the Roman emperor continued to be considered the head of the *orbis romanes* (Roman world) and the *icumenes* Christian (globe). On this doctrine, even the lands that once belonged to the Roman Empire were considered its eternal and irreversible possession, despite the fact that they were then ruled by German kings, although the latter accepted the sovereignty of the Roman emperor and what they exercised was only a power delegated by him. Therefore, regaining Rome’s legacy was a natural right of the Roman emperor. It was his sacred mission to liberate Roman territory from the yoke of foreign barbarians and Arian heretics, to turn the former borders of the Empire into an inseparable and Christian one. Justinian I (527-565) put his policy in the service of this mission.³³²

It is rightly said that in accordance with this mission, Justinian of Tauresio of Dardania began to act, that is, to direct much of the imperial policy since the reign of his uncle Justin I (518-527). An intellectual with military ambitions will soon ascend to the hierarchy of power from which he will be distinguished by his ambitions to capture his peaks, which he will bring to life after the death of Anastasius I when he is elected emperor. With Justinian becoming emperor, he will not be put in charge of military campaigns, as expected, as he was also in the military, nor will he be put in charge of special state affairs, such as the action for legal codification, nor will he announce administrative measures, but at the same time the most important campaigns of the Empire will begin to settle accounts with the barbarians in the east and north. At the same time, work will begin on legal codification, as will the major administrative reforms by which the state will create many of the opportunities for it acting in

³³² Idem, p. 42.

accordance with its projects so that it is above it all and for all. In this regard Emperor Justinian chose his best collaborators: Balisarius and Narses, those who led the great conquest campaigns. Then he chose Tribonian, who managed all matters concerning legal codification, as did the prefect of the Pretorate, John of Cappadocia, who took the most important administrative measures. But despite the hard work of his first and foremost collaborators, Justin was the inspirer of all the great enterprises of his time. However, it also includes those related to the modernization of cities, the fortification of vital parts of the Empire, such as Illyricum and Dardania, where he built magnificent castles (46 from Naissus to Scupi) and built numerous churches, especially in Illyricum and Dardania. Thus, the overall restoration policy pursued by Justinian was the most magnificent expression of this aspiration, although it did not last long, and although its failure had serious consequences for the Empire.³³³

In the fight to restore the power of the Empire and make it even greater, Justinian led his powerful commanders in Africa and western Europe to settle accounts with the Vandals, a people he had placed under surveillance North Africa and, since 468 when it had defeated the imperial army, appeared as independent. Belisarius landed in Africa in 533 with thirteen thousand soldiers, near Decim and Tricarico, badly defeated the vandal army. Their king, Genseric, was also taken captive, submitting himself.³³⁴ On this occasion, Belisarius had fierce fighting with some other Mauritanian tribes, which for many years had opposed the rule of Byzantium.

At the same time, Belisarius had to fight the Ostrogoths too, in which case the Byzantine army scored a series of victories in Sicily, which he conquered. From there, from Naples, he marched to Rome, and, after a pretty long siege, he captured the Ostrogothic king, Vitiges, and sent him to Constantinople (540). On this occasion, a large part of Illyricum stood for half a century under the conquest of the Goths. They were allowed to cross the Danube as early as 376, and this led to the penetration of the Huns. But, evidently, the Gothic “dam” did not hold. Because, under the leadership of Attila the “Whip of God”, they crossed the Danube and in 441-442 destroyed a good part of Illyricum. During their attacks, they destroyed seventy cities and forced the Eastern Empire to pay them heavy tribute, in addition to leaving the Danube Valley. In 447 Attila once again destroyed Illyricum and Dardania, penetrating as far as Greece.³³⁵

Unlike the Huns, the Goths came to invade the country and settle in it. They joined the army and on a proclamation by Theodoric as their king, gained the right to become part of the Empire. Of course, with they used the “new treatment” for internal purposes in rivalries between East and West. Thus, Emperor Zeno pushed Theodoric to jump against Italy. With an army of 200,000 men, Theodoric extended his vows to Illyricum and other provinces in the North and East in 489, as well as to Italy and Gaul. The Roman army temporarily halted the Gothic expansion, but not their end. When it seemed that they had decided to obey the imperial orders, led by Totilo, they rebelled and began to reap successive victories against the Romans. And it was Narses, another mighty soldier of Justinian, who was sent to Italy, who managed to subdue them, but this time the punishment was very severe, from which they never recovered. Thus, the kingdom of Ostrogoths fell in 552, and the Goths disappeared altogether from history.³³⁶

So after twenty years in this part, the restoration of the old power took place. On this occasion the latifundist aristocracy regained the properties from which the Ostrogoths had stripped it. However, it was up to Spain to break away from the Germans. There were the Visigoths, who little by little were deprived of much of the Iberian Peninsula, and after the

³³³ Kulakovskij: *”Istorija”*, II, 93.

³³⁴ Schmid, L: *”Geschichte de Wandalen”*, p. 125.

³³⁵ Jacques, Edwin: *”Shqiptarët”*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 171.

³³⁶ Idem, p. 171.

victory over the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Mediterranean again became the lake of the Empire.³³⁷

The timing of achievements in Africa and the West against the Vandals, Goths, Visigoths and others will not be repeated in the East. Thus, the main concern began to come from Persia, which was increasingly penetrating the extreme parts of the Empire. Although Justinian, in 532, had made peace with King Khosrow I Anushirvan (531-579), which would cost him dearly, as he was forced to pay tribute to the Persian Empire, in 540, Khosrow violated the treaty by assailing Syria and entering Antioch where his army caused great damage. The Persians did the same in the north when they entered Armenia, Hiberia, and occupied the province of Lazica on the Black Sea.³³⁸ The further advancement of the Persians was somewhat halted by a new half-century-long peace and an increase of attributes, which led Persia to increasing its power in the East.

The peace reached with the Persians, though costly to Justinian, did not stop him from penetrating China through a route passing through Persian territory through the Byzantine bases of Chersonisos and the Bosphorus to the Crimean Peninsula and Lazica in the Caucasus. China was important to Byzantium being a big market, from where it took and gave a lot. The interest, here, was centered around Chinese silk. The so-called “silk warfare”, for the first time, allied Byzantium with the Turks, who at the time stretched as far north as the Caucasus and, like the Byzantines, were at odds with the Persians over silk trade issues.

Justinian’s vision of a world-wide Byzantine empire, in addition to expanding in Central Asia and China, which ran through the Black Sea and the Caucasus, would also lead him to India, where he made great efforts to approach as much as possible. New markets for it, from which raw materials such as Chinese silk and other products in the East were provided, provided great development to the Empire as they added opportunities to then throw its products into world markets. Thus, it increased its much needed income for such purposes.

In addition to the great successes it has achieved by restoring the spaces that the Empire had lost and adding many more, Justinian’s greatest and most enduring work undoubtedly remains the codification of Roman law. Here, too, he had the right hand of his close associate Tribanion, who made Justinian's work end as soon as possible and as complete as possible.

In addition to the great successes it achieved by restoring the spaces that the Empire had lost and adding much more, Justinian’s greatest and most enduring work undoubtedly remains the codification of Roman Law. Here, too, his right hand was his close associate Tribanion, who made Justinian’s work accomplished as fast and fully as possible. Thus, the entire work, called *Codex Justinianus*, was published in 529, so that after four years it was published in its entirety. In addition to the *Codex* and *Ditgest* (summary of the endless sentences of Roman jurists), *Institutiones* was drafted, intended as a manual for the study of law, which includes detachments from the two main works. Thus, the whole *Corpus iuris civilis* is supplemented by the *Novellae* summary, which were laws issued after the publication of the *Codex*, *Digest*, and *Institutiones*, which were published in Latin, and most of *Novellae* in Greek.

The codification of Roman law served as a unified legal basis for the centralized Byzantine state, featured by imperial absolutism. Though, Justinian’s code also proclaimed the freedom and equality for all people, no matter how and to what extent such a principle was applied.

As stated above, Justinian’s Empire was unable to withstand the test of time. It shone for a while and could continue to be so only as long as he would be on the top, able to reconcile a glorious past, which could not be repeated, and a future that could not be stable because they lacked emperors with vision such as Justinian.

³³⁷ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, p. 43.

³³⁸ Idem, p. 43.

Thus, after Justinian's death, the Empire began to experience shocks and falls from where it had begun its restoration, Italy and Africa. In Italy in 568 the Longobards attacked, occupying part of the country. In Spain, the Visigoths took the stage again, taking Cordoba in 572 and after a while the largest parts of the country. In Africa, alongside the Mauritanian tribes, the Arabs emerged with their powerful and unstoppable attacks on its North, warning of their rapid involvement in developments that would give special color to world civilization. Thus, the center of gravity of Byzantine politics shifted back to the East, where it will remain for a long time in the whirlpool of countless failed struggles until the end comes.³³⁹

The decline of the imperial power which Justinian restored was not merely a loss of something that could be restored under certain circumstances. On the contrary, this loss represented a fundamental stage in the transformation of the old state structure of the last Roman period into a new system, that of the medieval Byzantine Empire, which practically shows what is known in the historical scene as *Middle Ages*.

The emergence of what will be called the Middle Ages is also linked to Justinian's descendants and their efforts to renew the Western empire with eastern vitality by linking political governance with the military one. This would pave the way for the militarization of imperial power, which would lead to a new crisis of governance with great unrest and turmoil, which would also produce tyranny such as that of Emperor Phocas in 605 when it would be overthrown by Heraclius, who on October 5 of that year, after bloody events, will be crowned Emperor by the Patriarch of Constantinople, thus ending once and for all the last phase of the Roman Empire and closing what has been called the late Roman or early Byzantine period.³⁴⁰

It was precisely his right hand, Maurice, who after two emperors succeeding Justinian, Justin II and Tiberius Constantine (578-582), would come to the imperial throne and for the next twenty years, (582-602) he managed to strengthen the Empire, after many, many disturbances, and at the same time free it of the constant threats of the Persians, with whom he would wage long wars, which he would successfully conclude due to the commitment of all the internal powers of the Empire, after which he will conclude a long-term peace treaty with the Persians by which a large part of Persian Armenia passed to the Byzantine Empire.

Mauricius' victories in the East over the Persians, as well as the stabilization of the Empire from within, cannot be said to have been to the detriment of the western part of the Empire. He, on the contrary, made great and unceasing efforts to preserve its vows from the time of Justinian, especially those in Africa and the Ravenna part, where the Longobards appeared with their well-known claims. However, unlike Justinian, who saw the expansion of imperial power as a civilization issue and tried to make it so everywhere, Maurice returned to strict military organization in the western provinces. Thus, he established *exarchates* of Ravenna and that of Cartagena,³⁴¹ a form of military dynasty, able to defend themselves. These vicars submitted to the exarches, inaugurating the period of *militarization of the Byzantine administration* and warning of the future system of *themes*, on which, as is well known, the new and direct oversight of the various parts of the Empire by the center and leadership would be extended in accordance with its interests.

The militarization of the Empire, although it seemed to bring stability, at least in some parts, however, it was not able to bring back the claims of remaining in the well-known course of Justinian as world empire. Slavic incursions on the one hand, as well as internal strikes against absolute rule, opened up the internal fronts, which were reflected in a fierce battle between the "*blues*" and the "*greens*" (the political current between *demos* and *deposit*), which led to weakening of the authority of power. Add to that the military's dissatisfaction

³³⁹ Idem, p. 49.

³⁴⁰ Schevill, Ferdinand: "*Iliriku – historia dhe qytetërimi*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 56.

³⁴¹ Ravenna hexarch is first mentioned in 584, while that of Cartagena is met for the first time in 591. For more details see: Diehl, *Exarchat*, 6; Hartman: "*Byzantinische Verwaltung*", 9 and continuing; Gelzer: "*Themenverfassung*", 6 and cont.

(lack of wages, disappointment from long-running campaigns in the north against the Goths and Slavs, who were increasingly insisting on infiltrating the east), then the situation became more mature for an army response. It will not be long before it arrives from the Danube when a semi-barbaric non-commissioned officer named Phocas, led by rebellious soldiers, marches on Constantinople. This sparked a major uprising in the Byzantine capital itself, which resulted in the overthrow of Maurice and the proclamation of Phocas as Emperor.

The arrival of the semi-barbaric officer on the imperial throne, as an expression of a first military coup, opened the bloody chapter of the Byzantine rule, which was followed by uncontrolled terror, internal conspiracies and most serious intrigues. All this was preceded by terror against Emperor Maurice, who, after being dethroned, was brutally slaughtered, and so in the last breath was dragged away to see his sons being massacred. These executions were followed by mass killings with terror hitting mainly prominent families, who turned to resistance through various conspiracies, resulting in new massacres led by certain “lodges”.³⁴²

In this bloody skirmish, losing his internal support, especially from the aristocracy, which turned against him for introducing the military apparatus into state terror, making it a decisive force factor, clearly Emperor Phocas sought and found the support of Rome, a card that, as will be seen, will be just as harmful and even fatal to both sides, especially to the Holy See, resulting eventually in losing its influence in the East not only spiritually, but also in an administrative and cultural sense. Because after the fall of the tyrant Phocas, the Church of Constantinople will not only become the full ruler of the East, but it will officially abolish the Latin language even from liturgy, thus beginning the time of the Greekization of the Orthodox Church throughout the Eastern Empire.

In fact, the cunning emperor made his return from Rome by sending an edict to Pope Boniface III in 607, recognizing the primordial church of St. Peter’s above all the churches, thus violating an edict of a century before when the patriarchs of Constantinople carried the title of “Ecumenical Patriarch”.³⁴³

Rome’s support and the power it gave her, apart from the praise given to the Byzantine tyrant in the West, brought them nothing but the loss of further confidence in Constantinople, which began to be expressed in various forms of civil war, becoming inevitable as its ecclesiastical Orthodox policy degenerated into bloody persecutions of monophysites and Jews.

In these circumstances of internal weakening, the danger from the outside appeared again. It came from the Persians, who investigated the right moment to restore what Emperor Maurice had once taken from them. The king of Persia, Khosrow II, the very one whom Maurice had once brought to power, but in order to remain faithful to the peace of coercion, attacked Byzantium, and in 605 conquered the castle of Daraa. He did not stop there, but continued on to Asia Minor, invading Caesarea and approaching Chalcedon.

When the Empire was on the brink of collapse, salvation would come from the suburbs. Heraclius, exarch of Cartagena, rebelled against the Phocas terrorist regime. Egypt also joined him. Heraclius sent his son, also called Heracles, to Constantinople to head a powerful fleet. There he was received with enthusiasm and on October 3, the terrorist regime of Phocas was overthrown, while the tyrant was publicly burned at a stake. Two days later, Heracles was crowned emperor by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

This was the true moment of the beginning of Byzantine history, that is, the history of the medieval Greek Empire and the Greekization of Byzantium.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 51.

³⁴³ For more see: Gelzer, H: “*Der Streit ber den Titel des ökumenischen Patriarchen*“; Gaspar, E: “*Geschichte des Papsttums*“, 1933, cit. 364, 452; Haller, J: “*Das Papsttum*“.

³⁴⁴ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 52.

The factors leading to this historic change are usually required from the outside (Goth, Avar, Hun, Slav and other attacks in the North and East), whose role cannot be denied being in some cases decisive, though in this case the internal factors seem to be underestimated or mitigated, first and foremost the ecclesiastical and military one, which will radically change the concept of Justinian's idea of a universal empire, that is, a world one with Christianity that would be subject to the emperor with the Holy See as a spiritual center, that is, the West.

Undoubtedly, external factors, such as Goth, Avar, Hun and Slavic attacks, will weaken the Empire's defensive power, as will other crises that will produce administrative and economic reforms, but they will be exploited by the Eastern Church and the new military caste, which brought tyrant Phocas to power, for its own purposes, to put an end once and for all to the influence of the church of Rome in the East, as will happen after the arrival of Heracles on the imperial throne, in 605, and also, with the help of the *ecclesiastical-military factor*, to pave the way for the Greekization of Byzantium. It was thus the beginning of an alliance between the church and the army, which in future events played an important role, as this connection would militarize the church blessing the frequent military actions of the military with an ecclesiastical spirit.

Indeed, the arrival of Heracles in Constantinople at the head of a military fleet, which intervened to save it from the collapse in which it fell was part of an agreement between the Church of Constantinople and the Exarchate of Carthage, Heracles, to remove tyrant Phocas from the throne and with him repeal his edict of 607 by which the Holy See was recognized as the ecclesiastical primacy throughout the Empire. So it happened. This was best seen with the coronation of Emperor Heracles under the blessing of the Bishop of Constantinople, the first of such a nature, from whence the head of the Orthodox Church would also become the vicegerent of the Emperor.

Taking advantage of the threats posed by the Avar, Hun and Slavic threats in the Danube, Heracles, strongly supported by the Church of Constantinople, continued overthrowing the administrative system of the Empire's internal government, which had been pursued by emperors from Illyricum: Constantine the Great, Justin and Justinian, who laid the foundations for Byzantium precisely by relying on the concept of the Roman Empire, empowered with Christianity, not in the sense of dominating it, but of its being co-participant to the Emperor granting him overtime the spiritual blessing, as Constantine the Great and especially by Justinian I did in order to gain for himself the broad masses who believed in the promises of Christianity about social equality. So, Heracles, uses his first departure from the concept of the Byzantine emperors coming from the West and exploiting Christianity for political needs, beginning with profound changes in the structure of the army and provincial administration of the medieval Byzantine state, which at the time of Emperor Maurice was divided into exarchates. Thus, on the basis of exarchates, such as that of Carthage and Ravenna, he established the system of *themes*,³⁴⁵ whereupon the territory of Asia Minor, not yet invaded by the Persians, was divided into administrative districts with a clear military character. At the head of the *themes* will be placed military strategists, who had great powers, under whose authority were included more than one of the old provinces.

This system, which included local armies, those of farmers called "*stratioti*", changed the form of local government, which with the emergence of *themes* and military *strategists* at the helm, lost the form of prefectures, which had existed from the time of Diocletian onwards. It was now the strategists and the clergy beside them those who had gained all the power of the

³⁴⁵ The word "*theme*" indicates a military corps and was further used to denote the new military districts that provided internal power. In fact they represented not only administrative units, but also territories colonized by troops. The military was given an inherited land fund, which in later sources is called "military property". From the time of Heraclitus the themes of the Opsicans, Armenians, and Anatolians were born. Of that time is also the maritime theme of the Karabisians, on the southern coast of Asia Minor.

local government, who will eventually, at least for a time, be successful. And this success will be reflected in the strength that Heracles gained to launch a military campaign against the Persians, possible after he had previously made peace with the Avars (619), to whom he was obliged to pay a heavy tribute, necessary to keep them as far away as possible while dealing with the Persians.

Of course, after four years, Heracles was able to start the war against the Persians, which, after initial defeats, he would win, whereupon he would enter the residence of Ardashir, the first of the Sassanids, and one of the most important religious centers of the Persians. On this occasion Khosrow was forced to leave the city, which fell into the hands of the Byzantines. The Fire Temple of Zarathustra, the city's most important temple, was destroyed in retaliation for the looting of Jerusalem.³⁴⁶

Heracles' successful campaign in Persia was followed by a surprise Persian counterattack in 626, when their leader, Shahbaraz, crossed Asia Minor, conquered Chalcedon, and appeared on the Bosphorus. At the same time, the numerous hordes of Avars, who had been joined by Slavs, Bulgarians and Gepids, would approach Constantinople. In July he besieged the city and reached the main gates. The battle was set at sea, when the strong Byzantine fleet broke the Slavic ships, who unused to such a confrontation, were unable to wage an organized war. This caused the Avar ground forces to retreat in panic, which also influenced the Persian forces to abandon Chalcedon in the direction of Syria. His brother, Shahin, was badly defeated by the emperor's brother, Theodore.³⁴⁷

The Avar-Slavic-Persian defeat at the walls of Constantinople gave wings to Heracles, who investigated the moment to make another military demonstration against Persia, which would be given a heavy blow when Khorsow and Destager were conquered in 628. . Khorsow' dethroning a little later, as well as the ascension of his son, Kavadh Shiroe, to the throne, under Heracles' supervision, restored all the territories to the Empire: Armenia, Roman Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. This prompted Heraclius to go to Jerusalem in the spring of 680 and restore the Holy Cross, which had been seized by the Persians many years earlier. This solemn ceremony sanctioned the end with victory of the first great religious battle of the Christian era.³⁴⁸

Although the important military victories of Heracles in the East will not last long, as they, obviously, will soon be annulled by the Arab attacks, yet the Heracles era in Byzantine history represents a turning point not only in political but also in the cultural life. Because, with Heracles, the *Roman stage closes* and the *Byzantine one opens* in the true sense of the word. Full Greekization and the powerful clericalization of all public life give a new physiognomy to the state as a whole.³⁴⁹

In addition, another great "merit" is attributed to the emperor Heracles, which will change the appearance of the imperial internal life. It is about allowing the Slavs to settle in Illyricum, these barbarian tribes from the Carpathians, who for a long time were threatening their civilization with invasions to the West, though their "acceptance" under the account that they, in this way, would be "mitigated" to the Empire's benefit, went to the detriment of its main ethnic and social factors, the Illyrians and Dardanians, who had great merit for the founding and upliftment of Byzantium and its conduct to a great extent in the East. Illyrian and Dardanian emperors: Diocletian, Constantine the Great, Justin and Justinian I, in the framework of imperial reforms not coincidentally raised Illyricum to the level of a key province between western and eastern parts, which will represent an arena of the most

³⁴⁶ Ostrogorski, Georg: "*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 69.

³⁴⁷ Idem, p. 70.

³⁴⁸ Idem, p. 71.

³⁴⁹ Idem, p. 71.

important developments in the following centuries where the vitality of the Roman Empire as a world power will be tested.

With the permission of the Slavic barbarian tribes to settle in the areas where the Dardanians lived mainly (from the Danube in the direction of the Morava and Iber rivers) and in the direction of Sava and Dalmatia, where the Illyrians lived, Heracles began the process of ethnic disarray in the already Illyrian-Dardanian administrative, social and spiritual administration among the most stable in that part which kept the balance of the imperial edifice, which for more than a century had withstood the attacks of the barbarians from the north, thus turning into an anti-Slavic fortification, of such as Emperor Justinian had predicted. He had done his best on the administrative and military plain that Dardania in particular and Illyricum in general gained additional defensive powers through fortifications, which were at the same time part of a special imperial identity, where Western spirit and Christianity were already at stake.

And, noticeably, with the beginning of the settling of the Slavs in these parts (a process that will continue intensively over the next two centuries) as well as by their joining the army (no longer as mercenaries as happened from time to time when they were engaged for certain needs rendering to many services) - by granting them the right to create their own family-tribal communities (zhupanies), which were of a very primitive mentality as compared to what Dardania and Illyricum had (it is enough to only the magnificent cities built by Justinian in Dardania from Justiniana Prima, Justiniana Secunda, and many others, with the former becoming a vicariate and capital of the Illyrian church directly connected with the Holy See). The time of violent Slavization of the Empire in the western part of Illyricum will begin, just as the exclusion of a culture of antiquity based on the values of world universalism, precisely what the Roman Empire and the peoples who built it had cultivated, and it will be done first by restoring the Greek language to an official language and later with its introduction into the liturgy and local administration, which shows a complete Greekization and powerful clericalization of the entire public life.

In fact, in the eastern part, the Latin language as an administration and army language had long since begun to be eroded. "Bilingualism", as the first step in preparing the ground for the Greek to one day win in the East, will come precisely from the Church of Constantinople on grounds that the people sought mass in the language they understood, that is, Greek, even though it would never become the "language of the people", for the fact that it continued to remain in use only in the church and administration. Heraclius put an end to this situation, and the Greek language became the official language of the Byzantine Empire.³⁵⁰

To further strengthen Greekism turning it into the foundation of the Byzantine state, Heracles relinquished Latin imperial titles and was called *basileus*, after the popular Greek name. *Basileus* became the official title of the Byzantine emperor and was considered the true imperial title, which would drop from use the term of Roman emperors, the *Caesars*. With this, the way will be opened for the final division of the churches in that of the Latin rite, centered on the Vatican and that of the Orthodox rite centered in Constantinople, a division that from the eleventh century onwards, passing between Illyricum and what later will appear as an Arbërian and later Albanian ethnic space, will also present the border of the division of civilizations followed with fierce and unstoppable wars taking place based on this division.

ILLYRIANS WITHIN THE EARLY BYZANTINE MINDSET

³⁵⁰ Zilliacus, H: "Zum Kampf der Weltschprache im oströmischen Reich", Helsingfors, 1935, p. 36.

Opening the way for the Slavic barbarian tribes to settle in Illyricum and the officialization of the Greek language, on the one hand, would directly affect the Illyrian-Dardanian administrative, social and cultural identity, which had begun to be legitimized by the time of the Diocletian emperor Constantine the Great, and Justinian in particular and, on the other hand, will go in favor of the Greekization of the Byzantine Empire by eventually turning it towards the East. This all will be to the detriment of the spirit of world universalism, which had characterized the Roman Empire in the previous centuries when it reached its peak of power and glory. .. Emperor Heraclius, who came to power with the help of the Carthaginian exarchate army and the church of Constantinople, will accept the latter's help rather as an alliance that the crown needed to gain the trust of the people there. While Constantinople will be using it for social and political dividends turning it into a permanent capital, turning it into a co-participant of the imperial crown power for centuries until the end of Byzantium, when Constantinople will fall into the hands of the Ottomans. Even then, as it fell to the Ottomans, the Orthodox Church would quickly adapt to the circumstances, retaining some of the positions it held during Byzantium, which evidently although not in power as before was, however, in the service of the new authority.

Connecting with Constantinople and its cross, Heraclius at the same time finally broke away from the Roman Church and the West in general, a separation resulting not only in division but also in enmity with it, an action that will first and foremost affect Illyricum, as from an administrative point of view, as a province it belonged to the East. From the ecclesiastical point of view, it belonged to the West, that is, to the Church of Rome, where it would remain until the ninth century, when, as is well known, after the arbitrary decision of Leo III it would belong to the jurisdiction of Constantinople. This decision will be justified in the 8th Convention of Constantinople of 869-870, when parts of Illyricum occupied by the Bulgarians will pass to the Church of Constantinople. This fact will result in a deliberate exclusion of the Illyrian-Dardanians for four centuries, so that the traces will "suddenly" reappear in the 11th century, as *Arbërian*, *Albanian*, *Rabanian*, and otherwise.

Before this development could take place, it must be said that Illyricum will be greatly involved and will play an active role in what will emerge as the medieval mindset, which will emerge on the historical stage from the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion and so on, which will be done by the Dardanian Emperor, Constantine the Great in 319, to continue at all stages until it becomes a social and political dogma of what is actually known.

Since, as known, the emergence of Christian missionaries, and with this the traces of Christianity in Illyricum and Dardania date from the first century AD,³⁵¹ it is expected that in this area the first clashes between monotheism and polytheism, between Christianity and paganism will occur in a rather harsh form as the Roman pagan empire had given its main test of penetration into the East at this junction, as conveyed by the land and water routes connecting the West with the East ever since. The new challenge, emerging in the East and spreading on all sides, meant an inevitable confrontation with it at this crossroads, one of the most important of which, depending on its penetration into the West, depended on the support it could gain in these parts and vice versa. Even the Roman Empire, aware of this, will not by accident take the harshest measures against the missionaries in these parts, as depicted by the first martyrs from Dardania known as: Floris, Lauris, Prokulis and Maximus. These and the like were said to be scattered in the West and North-East to enter Italy as well.³⁵² *Acta Sanctorum* also mentions their hometown, Dardania, and the name of the city where they were tortured, Ulpiana. Evidently, they were stone carvers and could be twins. Although the exact date of their martyrdom is not known, it is nevertheless related to the time of Emperor

³⁵¹ For more see: Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeca*", Zagreb, 1986.

³⁵² Forlatus D: "*Illyricum Sacrum*", Volume, VIII/2, Venetiis, 1751-1819.

Hadrian (117-138), known for his harshness towards any Christian teaching appearing in these parts.³⁵³

However, an a priori establishment of medieval mentality in Illyria and Dardania within Christianity as a doctrine of the victory of monotheism over polytheism, breaks the clichés with which efforts were made for Christian missionaryism to be accepted with open arms, as supported by impressions from certain Byzantine ecclesiastical sources or even from the chronicles of the time, since even the consciousness of polytheism had not succeeded in defeating paganism once and for all, even after Christianity had been accepted as the official religion of the Empire. Neither Christian dogma had been able to break the connection with pagan faith and heretical consciousness or heretism (Arian schism, and other beliefs), which for a long time continued to clash and even confront in these parts, where some of them, such as Arianism, also occupied the main space.

As for the former, the pagan faith and the cults, it suffices to mention that even Emperor Constantine the Great - the one who made Christianity official for political reasons, did not personally renounce pagan consciousness, nor did he stop it when he converted to Christianity. Supposedly, at his deathbed he will be seeking communion (although one may not find this outside church sources, which can be viewed as speculation for the church's needs), although it is known that he was buried according to pagan rites in a sarcophagus, adorned by a grape vine, an important Dardanian cult since the time of the Pelasgians. This best explains the dilemmas, struggles and all that will accompany this part before and during what will be taken as medieval mentality, which, as seen from the burial of Constantine the Great, has never been able to be on a level of complete dogma, as the "new" has never been able to exclude the "old", just as the "old" was not able to prevent the impact of the "new".

That this was a long and fierce battle between different extremely unacceptable worldviews, with occasional and even unpredictable twists, this is best reflected in the decree by Emperor Julian, of 361, who proclaimed the renewal of polytheism, opening ruined temples and exempting priests from various obligations, even helping "returnees" with rewards. Emperor Julian was convinced that Christianity, as explained by the clergy and accepted by some high-ranking officials, was nothing more than a struggle for power coming from the bottom up, that is, the layer freed from slavery, demanding new social and political treatment to the detriment of the aristocracy with the church playing the role of the main inspirer using the trust for these purposes and at the same time matching the despotic tendencies of the emperors, who needed something like that. However, Julian will fail two years later precisely because freedom of religion was not able to protect the free faith from Christian dogma, which had already become nourishment for the masses, who were being promised equality and pious life, an illusion that seemed to be much more acceptable than the right to free faith from which they saw no benefit. And, not long after Julian's death, in 363, Emperor Theodosius decreed that Christianity was the only official religion. Moreover, a year later, a decision was made which not only denied the pagan cult any help, but also that all the property of the temples be confiscated and followers of the temples be persecuted.

By order of 392, every follower in private places was banned, seeing it as a legal violation and threatened with fines and severe punitive measures.³⁵⁴

Of this nature is the known code of Theodosius "*De paganis sacrificiis et templis*" (*On sacrifices and pagan temples*) which states:

"We decree that temples be closed everywhere... No one should make sacrifices. If anyone commits such a crime, let him be killed with the sword of vengeance. We decree to

³⁵³ *Acta Sanctorum*, die 18 augusti, III, Anverpiae 1737, 520-522, cited according to Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*", p. 56.

³⁵⁴ Sokoli, Ramadan: "16 shekuj", Tiranë, 1996, p. 20.

*confiscate the property of those killed and to punish the governors of the provinces if they do not act properly to eradicate these crimes.”*³⁵⁵

In this social development, i.e. the presence of extremes, one must see and understand Illyricum, Dardania and Macedonia as its most important provinces, where they will find permanent place and food. Therefore, it is not surprising that their extension to society, politics and the spiritual sphere will make the administrative and ecclesiastical boundaries, which appear from the 11th century onwards, turn into a space of fierce competition between the Eastern and Western Christian rites, while after four centuries, when Islam will appear, they will turn it into a space of civilizations clashes.

Indeed, the Illyrian-Dardanian mentality during the Middle Ages, that is, in circumstances where Christian dogma would make relentless efforts to absolutize every truth from the spiritual, social, and political ones, must be rather seen in the definitions of preserving space and thinking “differently” or heresy, even within what will be seen as an ecclesiastical doctrine in accordance with the sacred teachings.

In Dardania, in addition to the first appearance of the Old Testament translated into Latin, or as it was called “*Vulgate*”, by the Illyrian St. Jerome or Jeronim Eusebius also called St. John, in these parts seemed to find a very suitable ground, including the differences between *monophysites* and *dyophysites*, coming from distant parts of the Empire (Armenia and Egypt), i.e. the two well-known currents within the church. On the one hand, he defended his attitude toward the nature of the human-god spirit, and on the other, he saw it as represented by the Son of God Jesus, as his spirit. Although this quarrel will in some way be closed at the Council of Nicaea when the consent of the nature of the trinity is reached, namely that of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a doctrine that will eventually be legitimized in the Third Council, that of Chalcedon. in 451. However, it would be heretical thinking, which would henceforth circulate quite freely in Dardania and Illyricum, as a powerful faction within the church based in Alexandria, also supported by the Church of Armenia and a good portion of the bishops of Dardania. With this, Arianism becomes a major threat to ecclesiastical dogma, as this teaching did not accept the divine nature of Jesus, nor did it imply that he was the “illegitimate” son of God who was given birth by Mary. The Arians, who were having an impact from the beginning and being in the majority, excluded this teaching, being so powerful and influential, especially in the part of Dardania and Illyricum, where a “different thought” was preserved. What influence Arianism had on these parts is best explained by the acceptance of Christianity by the Goths of the Arian variant, which, from Dardania, spread rapidly to the northern parts of the Empire, an influence which will continue even after the end of their reign, in Italy and Dalmatia.

That the so-called schism among the Dardanian bishops was not just a “case-by-case effect of Arian’s stay in Dardania”,³⁵⁶ which was his punishment after the Second Council held near Constantinople at the request of Constantine the Great, who demanded order in the church instead of quarreling over the spirit of God among men. This is best illustrated by the case of the bishop of Naissus, Bonosius, who openly questioned the virginity of Mary, as did the heretics Helvidius and Jovinian. According to Bonosius, Mary had other children with Joseph after Jesus.

This heresy will disturb the church, which at the Council of Chalcedon will demand that the bishops of Dardania and those of Illyricum distance themselves from the heretical bishops led by Bonosius.

Of course, an inquiry by the Council, by a majority vote, will declare the heretical Bonosius to be excluded from ecclesiastical activity. However, it is known that the stubborn bishop will not only reject the sentence nor will he repent, but will continue with it for a long

³⁵⁵ Idem, p. 20.

³⁵⁶ For more see: Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska biskupija kroy stoljeca*”, Zagreb, 1986, p.33.

time in Dardania and other parts around him, which leaves for understanding that Arianism still had supporters on these sides,³⁵⁷ indicating that Arianism still had supporters in these parts.

Even in spite of these outlines, which will be harsh, regardless of the “reconciliation” made by the congregation in the council and regardless of the formal preservation of the jurisdiction between the church of Rome and that of Constantinople, the civil wars of one or the other churches for the greatest possible influence will continue with different and often narrow methods, where usually the political strengthening or weakening of one or the other side will be used for ecclesiastical favors.

However, the situation that Justinian had set through the first and second Novellas of 535 and 545 when Justiniana Prima would be declared the capital of the Illyrian bishopric with its vicariate directly linked to the Holy See, that is, when the Dardanian church would be erected at the highest state level, despite the well-known political and social disturbances and devastation that will occur after the coming to power of Heracles, as the Greekization of life in the eastern part will begin together with the process of secession leading to the partition with Rome, Dardania, at least formally, will continue to preserve something of the old condition, though this will narrow the possibilities of action it once had. And this, however, had to do with maintaining ties with the Holy See, whose jurisdiction was still respected before it was arbitrarily removed by Emperor Leo III in 733 to legitimize the 8th Convention of Constantinople in 870.

When speaking of Emperor Leo III and his followers at the 8th Congress when Illyricum and Dardania lost once and for all the place they had from the time of Diocletian, Constantine the Great and Justinian, trying to depose everything of their administrative, social and ecclesiastical identity connected with the Western Church and civilization that sprang from there, one should mention the fight against the icons that had turned into an internal ecclesiastical conflict, one of the largest and most controversial. Dardania and Illyricum in general were mostly stuck in it, as they were administratively included in the eastern part of the Empire, while from the ecclesiastical point of view they were included within the Western Church, that is, the Holy See. At the heart of that long, fierce conflict, and with great social and political consequences for the whole Empire, was the different interpretations of the role that sacred images (icons) played in the Christian faith.

The battle for and against the icons that began and turned into an extremely fierce ecclesiastical conflict, among other things, exposed the great cultural, social and political differences between the East and West, with the latter demanding that the ecclesiastical dogma not suffocate art and creativity in general, but also in ecclesiastical motives to use the freedom of the creator to be as creative as possible. This was in line with the pagan culture which was still preserved in a large part of Illyricum, but also elsewhere in the west, while the Eastern Church, i.e. Constantinople, required strict dogma in art and creativity, where the creators had to abide by the twelve apostolic commands about the images (icons) and nothing else had to be presented. This was in line with the influence of the Islamic and Jewish religions on Byzantine Christianity, which forbade the painting of saints and the motives associated with them.

During the reign of Justinian, who made the Church of Dardania, i.e. its center Justiniana Prima, turn into a vicariate and archbishopric of Illyricum directly connected with the Holy See, the art of icons will flourish in the churches on this part being everywhere adorned with similar motifs. Ecclesiastical images (icons) will not only be free, but they will turn into a kind of creative freedom, almost similar to what will appear in the Renaissance, when art and

³⁵⁷ Idem, p. 33.

creativity, after centuries of captivity, will be freed of Christian dogma and subject to the free will.

Even during Justinian's time, the *iconolatry* (worshipping icons), which found great support in Illyria and in other western parts under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Holy See, attempts will be made to turn the *iconoclasts* (haters of icons) into a majority and thus put an end to what could be taken as a free space of creation within Christian art. In the East, iconoclasm not only strengthened, but it turned into a *Paulician sect*, fighting against any form of religious cult and doing so with harsh interventions, destruction of works and punishment of creators.³⁵⁸

Thus, the struggle between the supporters of the icons and their haters will continue even after Justinian's death to turn into a fierce quarrel between the Church of Constantinople, which after the coming to power of Emperor Heracles will gain full legitimacy in the East, while the Holy See will continue for more than a hundred years, until Leo III appears with his well-known decree in defense of iconoclasm. Under the pretext that the iconoclasts and their numerous supporters in the church of Dardania had begun to take the side of the sacred teachings and righteous ecclesiastical views, Leo III, on the grounds that he should put an end to the heresy that had appeared in the western part, in 732, arbitrarily separated the church of Dardania from the jurisdiction of the Holy See placing it under direct subordination of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. According to this measure, the Christian clergy in these parts gained "better" opportunities to be supervised, so as not to lose their way.

This action, however, neither interrupted the worship of the icons, nor did it turn the Dardanian church into a voluntary follower of the Church of Constantinople, as was thought to be the case following these unilateral measures. On the contrary, Illyricum, with the exception of the bishopric of Durrës, continued to maintain ties with the Holy See, which was tolerated by the son of Leo III, Constantine V, who after coming to power after his father's death, in 746, will be dealing with Arab attacks, facing them in the same year in Syria and bringing defeat to the Omayyads, which after a long war was replaced by the Abbasid dynasty (750), which moved the center of the state from Damascus to Baghdad. The Emperor's mother, Irena, who was from Athens, where the worship of icons continued, demanded that a language of reconciliation be found with the worshipers of the icons, but her son refused. He became even harsher and demanded that he justify his iconoclastic stance with an ecclesiastical council, that of February 754, which was held at the imperial palace of Hierra in the Asian outskirts of the Bosphorus. In August of that year, the decisions of the synod were announced at the Constantinople Forum, severely banning cult figures, ordering the destruction of all cult statues, and strongly condemning supporters of the Orthodox parish, including Patriarch Germain as well as Johan Domasken, who refused to replace iconic praising Jesus with profane themed paintings with ornamental motifs of animals and plants, including portraits of the emperor hunting that had to fill the walls and gates of churches.³⁵⁹

Although profane art will hardly be considered in Dardania and Illyricum, as well as in most of the jurisdiction of the Holy See, relations between mother, Irena, and son Constantine V will be strained until after a plot comes to power the other youngest son, Constantine VI, who was also killed by his mother on August 15, 797. However, the return of icon worship did not get the church of Dardania and Illyricum back under the full supervision of the Church of Constantinople, although it was clear that after the agreement of Pope Stephen II with the king of the Longobards, Pippin, in January 754, the foundations of the state of the Roman Church connected with the Franks kingdom had been laid, in order to forever turn its back to the Byzantine emperor, although precisely from such a connection, after half a century this gave life to the Western Empire.

³⁵⁸ Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1986.

³⁵⁹ Idem.

Despite this great discrepancy, the 3rd - 9th centuries, which from a social and political point of view should be considered as a time of emergence and introduction of Illyrian-Dardanian citizenship within Byzantium - because both administratively, socially, politically and spiritually (by faith) this empire will be established and built thanks to the Illyrian-Dardanians, who, among others (Greeks, Armenians, Dacians) will become its main supporters - they should also be seen as part of a cultural development that will complement this identity even within the ecclesiastical dogma and all that medieval mentality allowed and enabled, where numerous Illyrian and Dardanian creators will reach the pinnacle of Byzantine art, from music, architecture, and theological thinking. The performance of Niketë Dardani and his musical works bearing a stamp to all medieval art, the great role of St. Jerome, with the translation of the Old Testament spreading its thoughts to the West thus helping accept Christianity as widely as possible, and the emergence of numerous architects and artists in all fields, explain a material and cultural development taking place among the Illyrian-Dardanians.

Archaeological excavations have uncovered roads paved on large stones, remains of temples and altars, baths, dwellings, aqueducts, inscriptions and a host of other finds of pottery, building ceramics, architectural models, mosaics and coins, proof of a cultural and artistic flourishing of the country accordingly. Archaeologists assure us that all finds from the 5th and 6th centuries in Prevalitana and Dardania, in northern Albania, and in Old and New Epirus in the South, testify to a uniform material culture. Thus, in the vicinity of Naissus (modern-day Nish), traces of a magnificent palace built during the 3rd-4th centuries by the Emperor Galerius, Diocletian's son-in-law, have been discovered. Remains of magnificent palaces have been found near Prishtina (those of Ulpiana and Jusitiniana Secunda), then in Theranda near Prizren, of Justiniana Prima together with those of the old Scupi near Skopje, some foundations of palaces in Vendinis near Podujeva and many more in numerous other parts of Kosovo and Macedonia.³⁶⁰

It was at this time, at the beginning of the 4th century, that the tradition of genuine basilicas began, being intertwined with the previous creators who used the tradition of high-pillar pagan art. But not only that. On the ruins of the preceding art the new paleo-Christian art appeared, absorbing the elements of antiquity to express through them the content of the new civilized worldview.

This art and power, however, did not succeed to survive neither socially nor politically nor culturally as it should, since in addition to the internal opponents it had (various currents within the church, which associated the expression of creative greatness and freedom, whenever dominating, with heresy, which as such was restrained and fought), there were also external opponents - barbarian tribes from the North, who whenever penetrated the imperial part (and it was mainly Illyrian-Dardanian) ruthlessly demolished it. This was also the case during the penetrations of the Avars, the Huns, but above all in the case of the Slavs, who, unlike the first, instead of entering and leaving after causing desolation, the latter, from the 7th century onwards, will not only refuse to leave, but will remain in the parts they will occupy, turning them into permanent possessions, in which case, in addition to the destruction they experienced, were condemned to remain not only detached from the civilization they had, but under the pressure of an almost barbaric social and political situation, similar to that of the Asian steppes from where they came.

³⁶⁰ See: Shukriu, Edi, "Ancient Kosova", Prishtinë 2004, "Dardania paraurbane", Pejë, 1966; "Fortifikata e Veletinit", Arheološko društvo Jugoslavie, Ljubjana; "Gradina e Gushicës dhe municipium Labuza", Anuar XXVII - XVIII, Prishtinë; Kovaljević, G: "Kasnoantička palata u Nerodimlji" at "Starine Kosova IX", Prishtinë 1989.

CHAPTER TWO SLAVS IN ILLYRICUM

MIGRATIONS OF SLAVS AND FIRST BYZANTINE CRISIS

It has been said that Slavic Christianity and its invasions changed the course of the Middle Ages as well as the course of European history in general. The first is justifiable on the spiritual, social and political plane, not only in the emergence of Byzantium as a continuation of the Western Empire, from whose spirit little by little it will leave to turn into an Eastern Empire, but also as a factor that will take on dimensions pertaining to the general flows of our civilization. As for the Slavs and their migrations (invasions), it can also be said that they produced great changes with social and political consequences, though they were not the ones who changed the course of history nor did they give it any special direction, except that they turned into actors being exploited for significant social and political change from Byzantium and up to the present days, especially in the relations between the West and East for mutual domination, issues that, depending on certain views and interests, are assessed in many different ways, mainly from causes of consequences.

Despite this, the Slavic invasions and their settlement in Illyricum, regardless of the actual time of their emergence, are followed by many and numerous uncertainties and speculations that have been continuing. Regardless of the factors of external and internal conditions that conditioned this, their emergence deeply affected the situation of the three main peoples of the then Illyrian: Illyrians, Greeks and Latins, to become catalysts of new realities, but that this touch, in terms of consequences, was reflected in different ways to each people separately,³⁶¹ becoming catalysts of new realities, though this touch, in terms of consequences, was reflected in different ways with each people separately.

And, these changes, being seen in accordance with the consequences and not with factors that conditioned them and out of a historical continuity from most of ancient times onwards, not infrequently created a vague or erroneous picture of developments, especially when the factors of the same are assessed differently, as has actually happened with the Illyrians and their descendants (Albanians from the late Middle Ages and later Albanians). .. In relation to the Greeks and Latins, they unilaterally seceded from the Byzantine imperial community, to be seen on the margins, or later, making their inevitable appearance, five or six centuries later, seem “accidental” and equally “unnatural”, from which stems the “confusion” and hence the unscientific approach to this issue to be nurtured.

The assessment that the Slavic invasions in Illyricum deeply affected the situation of the Illyrians, Greeks and Latins, first applies to the Illyrians, as they were faced with negative and extremely serious consequences initially and continuously. As this is being said, it takes into account that they and their space were the first target to be subjected to various acts among

³⁶¹ For more see: Porphyrogentius, Constantine: “*De administrando Imperio*” Washington, 1967; Hirsch, F: “*Gyzantinische Studie*”, Leipzig, 1878; “*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*” I-III, New York-London, 1991; Schreiner: “*Die Byzantinischen Kleinkroniken*” I, II,III, Wien, 1975-1979; Schewill, Janin, R: “*La geographie ecclestonstique del l' Empire Byzantine*”, I-III, Paris-Bucarest, 1899-1916; Ferdinand: “*Iliriku – historia dhe qytetërimi*”, Tiranë 2002, pp. 72-75; Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë 2002, faqe 108-149; Jireček, Konstantin: “*Historia e serbëve*”, Part One, Tiranë, 2010, pp. 87-108; Malcolm, Noel: “*Kosova një histori e shkurtër*”, Prishtinë 2001, pp. 23-42; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Tiranë 2002, pp. 203-209; Shufflay, Milan: “*Histori e Shqiptarëve të veriut*”, Prishtinë 2009, pp. 21-35.

the harshest, affecting their ethnicity as well as their social relations directly physically and politically. As for the consequences of the Slavic invasion for the Latins and Greeks, it can be said that it accelerated the process of separating the Latins from the Greeks so that the first (Latins) would join the Holy Western Empire that comes to life after the time of Charles the Great and hereafter, while the Greeks will turn the presence of the Slavs into an almost permanent political, social and especially cultural favor. With its officialization, the Greek language will become a liturgical language, which, evidently, in further processes, the inclusion, but also the accommodation of the Slavs in the Eastern Empire, will be under the direct influence of the Greek supremacy and the strengthening of them. This will be best reflected in the acceptance of Christianity by the Slavs, although they will initially have better connections with the Western Church (this is about the tribes concentrated in Bosnia and Zakhlumia, where they will have the true social and political core before being transferred to Rascia by Nemanja and his dynasty).

The internal Slavic division, largely defined by the acceptance of Christianity, occurring in the middle of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth century, is of particular importance, as this, in fact, represents their first social and political structures on a level of family and tribal organization within Byzantium and not as stated, in the sixth century, and sometimes even earlier, when their occasional penetrations from the North across the Danube, or associated with the Huns and Goths, as was the case with their attacks on Constantinople from the time of the Huns, Avars, and Persians during Heracles' time, or those of the Goths during the time of Theodoric, to be related to the beginnings of the "medieval Serbian state". Evidently, it is known to have appeared from the middle of the 12th century as a dynasty of the Nemanja in Rascia (Rasien), a vassal of Byzantium or even of the Bulgarian Kingdom of Boris and Simeon, after penetrating from the central part of Bosnian Zakhlumia, and Travunaria where their first tribal organization had the genesis, to strengthen itself by passing through Dioclea (Zeta). The "medieval state", as presented by a large number of Serbian historians and Serbian historiography, in an almost incompatible discrepancy between the geographical factor (space) and the ethnic factor,³⁶² is a nineteenth century construct, especially after the appearance of Garašanin's "Načertanije". Therefore, the titles of "Zhupan", "Sevastokrat", "Despot" and "Princes", "Kings" and even "Emperor", as is often attributed to Stefan Dušan, found in the Orthodox Church documents, or those of the Holy See (whose origin is mostly related to the tribal one),³⁶³ although fabricated for ecclesiastical purposes and placed in "authentic chronicles" to unilaterally influence history in accordance with Slavic-Orthodox hegemonic claims,³⁶⁴ belonged to an internal hierarchy of Byzantium,

³⁶² Historian Relja Novakovic deals intensively with the discrepancy between the geographical factor (space) and the ethnic one, as well as their relations in determining the place of the Serbs in history and their state according to the claims that should be seen in the Middle Ages in his critical study *"Где се налази Србија од VII до XII века ("Where is Serbia from 7th to 12th century)*, Београд, 1991. Based on two basic documents, the Chronicle of Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenit: *"De Administratori imperio"* and the Chronicle of Mario Orbini *"Il Regno degli Slavi hoggi corrottament detti Sclavoni"*, 1601, Novakovic concludes that the center of Serbian social organization is located in Bosnia (Zahumle and Travurn), while their extension in the eastern part, up to Rasia, where the Nemanjaj dynasty appears, is part of this development and by no means its epicenter. On this occasion, Novakovic concludes that Porphyrogenit's chronicle does not explain Serbian statehood nor its ethnicity at all, as appears to most Serbian historians casually and mythically, but instead leaves it dependent and with much ambiguity, especially in relation to other factors of the time, such as the ethnicities and state-building peoples of Byzantium (Illyrians, Thracians, Greeks), with whom they came into contact before their establishment by the 7th-10th centuries. Novakovic admits that the problems with determining the place of Serbs and Serbia in medieval history were caused by the rewriting and falsification of the Porphyrogenit Chronicle, especially that of the rewriting of Chapter 30 by unknown authors, as well as the falsification of the Mario Orbini's Chronicle, in which almost all Serbian and foreign historians support when talking about the "medieval Serbian state", which is usually amputated under the name "Sclavonija", mentioned by Porphyrogeniti, generalized, and where then without any scientific argument, Croats see the Croatian state (Croatia), Serbs see the Serbian state (Serbia), and Bosniaks see the Bosnian state (Bosnia)!

³⁶³ See: Constantinus, Porphyrogenitus: *"Corpus scriptorum Historaia Byzantinae"*, vol. III, Bonnae MDCCXI.

³⁶⁴ The falsification of church documents as well as their fabrication in accordance with the needs of the church, especially those of the Orthodox Church, is accepted by many authors, who take them with reservation and even evaluate them

divided according to the degree of self-government, autonomy, or other forms going as far as vassalage. Even the church factor (eastern or western) was always present and inevitably blessed these titles according to its own criteria and in accordance with ecclesiastical interests, usually associated with the strengthening of certain dioceses, which as such could only be done against local despots with the highest imperial titles.

Of this nature are also numerous and frequent titles of “Rex” (King), “Regnum” (Kingdom) in Latin, which are found in various Latin documents and sources, mainly extracted from the Vatican and carried on various “royal” charts, or translated from Byzantine chronicles, as is the work of Emperor Porphyrogenes (Porphyrogenitus), with whole passages “completed”, rewritten and falsified at different times,³⁶⁵ or that of M. Orbini,³⁶⁶ extremely misused for these purposes, though despite these falsifications of fundamental data about Slavs (especially Serbs), it can be clearly seen that the Serbian title “Rex” interpreted in Serbian as “Kralj” (King) is an ecclesiastical title for “*the first lord of the tribe*”, which in Croatian translates as “*gospodar-gospodin*” given to families and their ancestors as soon as they converted to Christianity and underwent ecclesiastical rules, which, at the same time, presented some form of local government. This misuse of the ecclesiastical terminology “Rex” (Lord of the House), for political purposes has been derived from “Regia” (Province) to “Regnum” (Kingdom).

Therefore, it is not surprising that currently there are many such ecclesiastical cards (bullae) in circulation in different versions of titles, causing confusion and also deliberate blurring from the 18th century onwards with the same card (bullae) appearing in six versions, such as that of Despot Uroš III and three others related to the “coronations” of Despot Stefan Dušan as a “King”. Although they were merely ecclesiastical property “title-deeds”, to preserve certain feudal lords and their property within the framework of tribal and local government in relation to the central government of Byzantium, which were quite natural and inevitable. Through them, the well-known vassalage relations with nobils, zhupans and despots in different parts of the Empire were built, as well as the collection of taxes, from which the feudal lords, zhupans and others from the local authority benefited. They had

critically. Among them is the well-known historian Konstantin Jiriček, author of “History of the Serbs”, in two volumes, first published in German in Gotha in 1918, where he expresses distrust of many ecclesiastical sources, even those in Latin, such as “*Gesta regum Sclavorum*” known as “*Letopis popa Dukljanina*” of 1601 where the word “*rex*” in Latin, which, according to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, refers to the head of the bishopric, is properly translated in Croatian – “Lord”, while in Serbian “Kralj” (King). The lack of authentic documents of the Slavic Orthodox Churches, especially those of Dečan, Peja and Prizren, which appear as inevitable references when it comes to the “medieval Serbian state” in Kosovo, as well as the fabrication of some of them “in accordance with the original” (although it is not known what the originals are as they do not exist), Jastrebov admits in his work “*History of the Serbian Church*”, published in 1879. But the most flagrant falsification of historical facts by which “Serbian statehood” had to be proved in the Middle Ages is done by the Serbian Academy of Sciences (SANU) by reflecting Byzantine documents in accordance with this unscientific concept. Of this nature are the six SANU publications from the fifties to the seventies of the last century “*Vizantijski Izvori za Istoriju Naroda Jugoslavije*”, where from the Byzantine source documents the historical data are interpreted in accordance with the great Serbian doctrines. Thus the *Triballi*, an ancient Dardanian-Illyrian people, turn into *Serbs*! The *Dacians* also turn to Serbs, without hesitating to have *Dalmatians* too appropriated. Thus, these six voluminous volumes are the main source of falsification of Byzantine history, which are widely quoted not only by most Serbian authors, but also by many foreigners, who, in the absence of a scientifically argued response, take them as “scientific” references, which unfortunately, as such, affect a good part of the official historiography in Tirana and Prishtina, where in general, during the naming of church buildings as well as social and political formations (zhupans, despots, feudal lords), the language of Serbian hegemonic historiography is kept in which case the despots and the Zhupans (Nemanjic), although by most Byzantine authors such as Chalcocandalyae, Leonici: “*Historiarum Demonstrationes*”, ed. E. Darco, Budapestini, 1922, Ducas: “*Historia Turco-Byzantina 1341-1462*, ed. V. Grecu, Bucharest 1958, are called *Triballi* princes, and the place *Triballia*, are called “*kinas*” and Emperors even, as is the case with Dušan, while zhupania “*Rascia*”, or “*Rassia*”, “*Rasa*”, which is continuously converted into “Serbia”, “Serbian Kingdom”!

³⁶⁵ See: Constantinus Porphyrogenitus: “*Corpus scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*”, vol. III, Bonnae MDCCXI, where in the description of the “pagan” peoples, in the part of Illyricum, for the Serbs he says that the Serbs in the language of the Romans are called “serfs” (σφοροί), their clothes “serbula” (σερβυλα) and those who wear them “cerbiljani” (τσερβλυιοι). They took the name of Serbs after they were taken captive by the Roman Emperor”. See, p. 150.

³⁶⁶ Orbini, Mauro: “*Il Regno degli Slavi hoggicarrottament detti sclavoni*”, 1601.

considerable power and often at certain times of the weakening of the central government, even beyond any declared rebellion, acted as independent, which in the chronicles of local churches such performances are marked as “autonomous states”.

Although this issue will be given more attention in the following, as it directly affects the historical relations between the descendants of Illyrians and Dardanians Arbërians (later Albanians) and Slavs in general from the Middle Ages onwards, especially in the circumstances of Orthodoxy when feudal power is determined by this affiliation, which will be later speculated on national identities (although notably at that time there was no such thing as a convention related to the eastern or western church), it must be said that ever since the first frictions with the barbarian tribes from the north (first with the Huns, then with the Avars and Goths, and later with the Slavs), the Illyrian-Dardanians within their ethnicity, that is, Illyrian, played a dual role: on the one hand being loyal defenders of the imperial space, and on the other hand its defenders barring the penetrations of destructive tribes, as they defended their own selves and their lands turning into the first prey of the invaders. Also, in this long and fierce war, when they were often left alone, they defended the Christian civilization, being among the first to have accepted, and their status of Byzantine citizenship (*Romaïos*) was connected with it.

In this dual role, the Illyrian-Dardanians also saw their own interests, since on the one hand, from the time of the emperor of Illyrian origin, Diocletian and beyond, after his well-known reforms, when the Illyrian province will be created as an eastern part of the Roman Empire, they saw it as their empire, which had to be defended at all costs, as it also protected their high social, political and cultural status as “*Romaïos*” which they had achieved since they had been declared free citizens by the Codex of Emperor Caracalla, and on the other hand, with Justinian’s well-known ecclesiastical reforms, when the ecclesiastical center of Illyricum was transferred from Thessaloniki to Justiniana Prima, that is, to Dardania, directly connected with the Holy See. After the well-known clashes between the numerous ecclesiastical currents (Arianism and others) and the headaches that they brought about, the Western church becomes part of their spiritual identity, which at the same time complemented the imperial, that is, the state identity.

That this was not a formal matter of political geography, as is sometimes viewed, but a spiritual affiliation that the Illyrian-Dardanians as genuine Byzantines simultaneously displaying their autochthonous identity, is best illustrated by the so-called crisis of icons, which for more than a century had turned into a civil but also a political war between East and West, which in turn led to developments leading to the final division of the church in 1054 into the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Latin) rites. This division that passed over the trunk of their ethnicity mostly hit them. Because that line will become a line of political and spiritual divisions including the dimensions that after a while (the emergence of the Crusades and after them the Ottoman conquests), will go as far as clashes of civilizations with serious consequences for the Arbërians.

As it is known, the Dardanian church within the administrative space of Illyricum, with a few exceptions (as was the case of the bishopric of Durrës leaning more towards the patriarchate of Constantinople than towards Emperor Anastasius, who came from this city), continuously defended the views of The Holy See, therefore, is lined up in defense of the followers of the icons. By this he remained faithful to Western concepts of creativity, with which it was identified as the initiator of the spread of Christianity, and on the other hand could oppose sectarian efforts coming from the East, which were commonly accepted by the pagan Slavs and other barbarians.

As for the first issue, namely the protection of the Empire as part of their country and full identification of their interests with the imperial ones, the Illyrian-Dardanians will face the challenge among the first since 376 when the Goths were allowed to cross the Danube to

escape the Huns, thus settling on a strip of land between the Rhodope Mountains in the East and Timok in the West, which actually represented a kind of dividing line between the Dardanians and the Thracians. Herodotus also mentions this line,³⁶⁷ and other ancient authors, known as Thrace, whose ethnic identity must be seen as linked to that Illyrian-Dardanian by the common Pelasgian trunk.

But the Goths were unable to fulfill the obligations taken as defenders from the Huns, as led by Attila, the Huns broke the Goth cordon and in 441-442 destroyed a good part of Illyricum. During their attacks, they destroyed seventy cities and forced the Eastern Empire to pay a heavy price. Many ancient authors speak of the dimensions of these ruins, which they call unprecedented in size describing the serious consequences they caused.³⁶⁸

After the Hun campaigns, which ended with the campaign of 447 with Attila once again devastating Illyricum from where they will cross over to Italy and there, after an agreement with Rome, their time will end, the Goths will become constituent factors. of the Empire, the moment they decided to remain in it and subject to imperial loyalty. Their participation in the army, as well as their willingness to engage in defensive fighting against attacks by barbarian tribes coming from the north and north-east, rewarded them with fertile land, which initially stretched across the Danube to the Black Sea, expanding shortly afterwards towards Pannonia, where the Illyrians lay. In this way, within a short time, from Byzantium, which was interested in strengthening in the western parts, Byzantine allowed them an Ostrogothic kingdom, headed by Theodoric, who had spent his youth in the court of Constantinople in defense of the emperor, and was valued as a supporter of the “middle line”, i.e. the East-West balance.³⁶⁹

From his proclamation as King of the Ostrogoths in 489, Theodoric extended his “Kingdom” to the West, largely to the detriment of Illyricum, from where he succeeded in penetrating both northern Italy and Gaul, and from there, those who had once been accepted into the Empire to defend it, powerful and with claiming that it had to be further strengthened and expanded on both sides, would turn into a new threat to it.

Although historical sources speak of the Goths settling in Illyricum (from 459-535) and its aftermath, it will be seen that they will not be able, as it was hoped, to turn them into “a dam” against the Huns, whose expeditions will continue from time to time, nor in stabilizing the situation. More than defenders from the Huns, with their expansion and settling in the empire, the Goths will become the forerunners of the new realities that the western part of the Empire will face, always at the expense of Illyricum, something that will be cause for another open conflict of the Empire with them, to which the last answer will be given by Emperor Justinian.

But was this a sudden threat, that “from something” could have been foreseen? Or it was part of an unstoppable development, which will show why Illyricum even as a new province proclaimed by Illyrian Diocletian and reformed by Dardanian Constantine the Great will not be able to turn into a shield against the penetrations of barbarians, as hoped, despite the great expenses made in the whole fortification system captivating the northern part of Illyricum (Danube) and Dardania?

In fact the reforming emperors: Diocletian, Constantine the Great and finally Justinian, considered the danger posed by the barbarians in the North, but among them they seemed to make distinctions as to who might be less dangerous, who even more useful, in the circumstances when the Empire needed not only soldiers but also labor to cultivate the lands, especially in the extreme parts. The need for working power became even greater as the empire, after the reforms, began establishing a clearer economic unity, which through the

³⁶⁷ “*Historiae*”, Book V/15.

³⁶⁸ Jacques, Edwin: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 171.

³⁶⁹ Idem.

Mediterranean connected three continents. Under these circumstances, the barbarians posed a great threat, but also an opportunity to give new blood to the Empire.

Consistent with this account Emperor Valens was among the first to allow the Goths to settle in parts of Thrace and Illyricum, as they saw them with a different eye from the Huns, who came from the steppes of Mongolia and during their attacks showed nothing but demolition and looting. As to why the Goths were seen with a different eye, however, had its own reasons for the oriental Germans inclination toward Christianity. Descended from the shores of the Black Sea, the Goths had come into contact with the ancient Greco-Eastern cult of the Greeks of the Crimean Sarmats, where they had learned the ornamental art of ornamental jewelry, which would later spread across Europe under the label of “barbarian”.³⁷⁰

As barbarians with a penchant for Christianity, the Ostrogoths pursued by the Huns will be thrown into Pannonia, that is, Illyricum, while the Visigoths in the part of Thrace under the Danube. It was in 276 when they left their lands forever and settled in the eastern parts of the Empire. With their entry, a foreign body had entered the Empire, which, as seen from the East, would gradually move westward, doing so after measuring their strength exactly where it was intended that they would defend the Empire. So in Thrace and near the walls of Constantinople, when during a rebellion they had managed to kill Emperor Valens in May 378. After this victory, the Goths, encouraged though always with the status of barbarians (by decree of Velenian and Valens in 370 and 375 under the weight of the death penalty prohibiting marriages between Romans and barbarians), will attack from the East the lands of Illyricum towards the South, that after plundering many cities of Dardania and Thessaly, they will reach Athens and the Peloponnese, and from there they will be thrown into Epirus, and surely if it were not for the intervention of Emperor Arcadius, to reach an agreement with them. to remain in the Empire under a special “federal” status, they would continue with further destruction.

Arcadius’ agreement with the Goths allowed them to settle in the province of Illyricum (in the western part in the direction of Italy). On this occasion, their leader Alaric was given the title “*Magister militum per Illyricum*” by the Emperor. This made the Goths feel not only the new owners of a good part of Illyricum, which had been given to them as a reward for them to take on the task of defense to that part, but also self-prepared to expand beyond what they already viewing as a Goth kingdom, perhaps even claiming that one day the Roman Empire would return to a Goth Empire. By such actions, Alaric, who had already plundered Rome and again turned to the North, would again hit Illyricum in the north, as he intended to connect the spaces of “Romania” with those of “Gothia”. This same path will be followed by Alaric’s successor, Athaulf, who had taken over the Goths after Alaric's death in 410. The Goths’ downfalls and continued wavering of the emperors making various calculations with them, especially when threatened by the Huns, resulted with Attila’s attacks and his known lootings from 447 to 451 starting from Thrace to Thermopylae, from where he will then return against the Gaul, and from there will cross the Rhine, destroying everything they could find up to Laurent. Of course it will be Aiteus, supported by the Germans, Franks, Burgundians and Visigoths who will defeat Attila, who two years later will find death in a battle taking place in Troy, France. With this victory, the Goths will become the masters of the Western part of the Empire, while their allies, the Germanic tribes, co-participate in the sharing of power divided into many parts, which in fact, at that time in the West only a mosaic of barbaric kings had existed: Ostrogoths in Italy, Vandals in Africa, Sueve in Gaul, Visigoths in Spain and as far south as the Laurent River, and Burgundians in the Rhine Valley.

The Goths in Illyricum appeared in 459. At their head was King Theodoric, who settled in Durrachium. From the Illyrian space the Goths will undertake occasional military

³⁷⁰ Pirenne, Henri: “*Muhamedi dhe Karli i Madh*”, Tiranë, p. 19.

campaigns in the direction of the Peloponnese, but also on the Italian shores. Thrace and Epirus will not miss their campaigns either, whereas the Goths, in order to supply themselves, plundered incessantly. During these looting campaigns, Nicopolis, Onherzmus and other cities up to Dodona suffered the most.³⁷¹

The concentration of the Goths in Illyricum, as well as their actions from this point, was neither accidental nor the result of certain circumstances, as might be seen upon their engagement in almost unexpected fighting with the Avars, who infiltrated Italy devastating most of it, and Theodoric needed an answer. The concentration of the Goths in Illyricum enabled them to exercise proper oversight in all three directions at once: eastward, over the Mediterranean, and westward. They already had in their hands not only the space to oversee it, but also the opportunity to observe social and political events on both sides of the Empire, claiming that they could influence and even direct them.

Of course, it would be the Dardanian emperor Justinian I to militarily resolve the Goth threat once and for all, when in 552, his commander Narses, after a profound defeat, ended the Ostrogothic Kingdom, after which they disappeared altogether as a nation from history. The end of the Goths, as it happened, brought Illyricum a little inner peace, though not a secure future that Emperor Justinian had desired upon granting it the role of a bridge between West and East. It was precisely the threat of Slavic tribes from the north and their subsequent violent incursions across the Danube, that began to disrupt not only the concept of Illyricum as the main province of the Empire in the east, but also for maintaining internal social and political balance of the Empire, which was also challenged in this part from the east.

After the death of Justinian and the crises that the Empire would go through during the rule of Justin and Maurice and that of Heracles, the latter would use the pressure of the Slavic tribes to use the Slavs as a “calming” factor. The doors were opened to them so that later, from the ninth century onwards, they become the dominant and even balancing factor of the Empire, as will happen from the ninth century onwards, acting in accordance with the various east-west alliances, by means of which its weakening and downfall will be accelerated. By allowing them to settle in Illyricum, through the help of the Slavic settlers the Eastern Empire gained an opportunity to remove the Persian threat in the East, an action that is known to go to the detriment of the Illyrian-Dardanians and the weakening of the western part of the Empire in relation to Constantinople, as the way will be opened for the well-known alliances between the eastern church and Heracles to weaken or completely remove the influence of the West.

This will be best reflected in the introduction of the Greek language as the official language in the East and as a liturgical language, so that Illyricum, which was under the administrative and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the East and the Church of the Holy See, will be brought in a very difficult situation with the internal and external fractures passing over it. These developments will lead to well-known events, on the one hand the collapse of the Western part of the Empire, and on the other, the division of churches, whereupon most of Illyricum will belong to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Constantinople and thus also from a social, cultural and political point of view submitted to the East. Obviously, the language of the churches (in addition to Greek, in the central part, from the 11th century also Old Slavonic), will be decisive not only spiritually, but also culturally and socially in general, as they will affect that certain ecclesiastical identities to be translated into ethnic, even social, and political ones, on which later (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) national movements will be based.³⁷²

³⁷¹ See: Ducas, M: “*Historia Byzantinia*”, Bonnae, 1834; Schreiner, P: “*Die Byzantinschen Kleinkroniken*”, I,II,III, Wien 1975-1979; Feveriale, Zhan Klod: “*Historia e Shqipërisë*”, Tiranë 2004, p. 110.

³⁷² See: Janin, R: “*Constantinople byzantine*”, Paris, 1964.

But who were the Slavs and where did the tribes come from which will turn into important factors with which the Illyrian-Dardanians and their branch the Triballi,³⁷³ later, their descendants Arbërians and Albanians will have frictions, conflicts and even fierce wars, even including a fragile coexistence over the same spaces?

It must first be said that the Slavs emerge in the imperial chronicles in a foggy way, sometime in the 5th century AD thanks to a mixture of Avars and other nomadic peoples from Central Asia, who occasionally attacked the western parts leaving behind devastation everywhere they passed and returned to their steppes. Some historical sources indicate that the Slavic motherland was the wasteland of the Pripyat River, north of the present-day Ukrainian city of Kiev.³⁷⁴

But, in this wandering of their starting point, there are numerous other records showing that their first nest could not be the plains, but some mountainous place, or even the steppes, which produce nomadic mentalities, namely from the steppes between the Carpathians and the Urals, where the Finns were located who initially stretched south-west. Some old sources, however, indicate that the real Slavs in the part between the Carpathians and the Urals, bordered with the Germans in the west and Lithuanians in the north, while in the barren steppes of southeast their neighbors were the Iranian peoples, and in the south, in the Carpathes, were the Thracians, later mixed with some Celtic tribes. The Slavs undertook their first release from the siege of the neighboring peoples in the direction of the East over the Dnieper, with another direction from the West, where the language of the Slavs of Elba has preserved very ancient forms of sound.³⁷⁵

On this assumption Jirecek supports the view that the Romans and Slavs were introduced through the mediation of the Germans and that the Romans called the Slavs Venetians (*venedi* (*Ουενδαί*), as they were called in medieval Germany *Vinidi*. As *Vened* they are mentioned in Pliny as a people east of Weichsel, which as a geographical picture of the east from the records of Tacitus when “Venedes” are mentioned against the Germans, Dacians, Sarmatians, Esiers (Lithuanians) and Finns. This, however, must be taken with reserve, because in addition to the origin, the meaning of which is not known, this name was not known by the Slavs themselves and was never in use,³⁷⁶ as even the Byzantines did not know the name “*Vened*”, but rather referred to the name *Slovenin* (in the plural *Slovene*), as the Slavs called themselves. Thus, from the 6th century onwards, the Greeks called them Σκλαβμοι (reading *Sclavini*), by the Romans as *Sclaveni*, *Sclavini*, *Sclavi*), while the Syrians and Arabs called them *Sakalib*. Linguistically, the meaning of the topic remains obscure.³⁷⁷ In many of the interpretations, the closest name for the Slavs is related to the Roman *Sclaveni*, *Sclavinorii* - servant. So, for those who performed services, which also coincides with the fact that their permission by Emperor Heracles in the 7th century in Illyricum was intended to them to *serve* as defenders from barbarians in the central parts of the peninsula (Bosnia), where their tribal organization began.³⁷⁸

³⁷³ Many ancient authors speak of the *Triballi* as a well-known Illyrian tribe, defining their place in the north, in the area between the Illyrians and the Thracians and in the vicinity of the Dardanians. While Chalkonkondil says that they are of *Illyrian branches*. This chronicler of the time says that the Triballi and Myzes speak the same language as the Illyrians, while their names come from their geographical extent (See: Chalconcandylae, Leonici: “*Historiarum Demonstrationes*”, Budapestini 1922, pp. 30 and 280-282.) Cristobulos also talks about the connection of the Triballi with the Illyrians. The Byzantine chronicler sees the Triballi places in the center of Illyricum, the flow of the Morava to the Danube in the north, while in the east bordered by the Dacians, and in the south by the Paenonians. (See: Cristobulos: “*Imbriotae Historiae*”, ed. D.R. Reinsch, Berlin, New York 1983, pp. 27,85, 95, 97-98 and 175).

³⁷⁴ For more see: Ostrogorski, Georgije: “*Istorija Vizantije*”, Beograd; Iorga, Nicolae: “*Bizanti pas Bizantit*”, Tiranë, 2009.
³⁷⁵ Idem.

³⁷⁶ See Miklosich “*Die Bildung von Ortsnamen aus Personennamen im Slawischen*”, 1864, p. 373.

³⁷⁷ Idem.

³⁷⁸ About the first organization of Slavic tribes in Illyricum see: Porphyrogentius, Constantinus: “*De Thematibus et de Administando Imperio*”, Bonnae MDCCXL; Orbin M: “*Il Regno degli Slavi hoggicarrottament detti sclavoni*”, 1601; Новаковић Рела: “*Где се налази Србија од VII до XII века*”, Београд, 1981; Ćirković, Sima: “*Srbija u srednjem veku*”,

However, a little later, they would be seen in groups, spreading to the Carpathian Mountains, from where they would begin heading towards the Roman Empire, for the sole reason that in Thrace and Illyria the living conditions were better and, like many nomadic and barbarian tribes of the East, who turned to this part, the Slavs did the same, which does not rule out the possibility that this movement was imposed by pressure from other nomadic tribes from Asia, who also moved west.

Various Byzantine sources indicate that before they were subjected to these movements to the West, in their early lands they engaged in hunting, and later also in livestock, though with no inclination for agriculture, which, apparently they will gain after settling in Illyricum and Thrace, searching for bread land which would determine their subsequent movements by the river valleys and fertile parts, mostly owned by the Illyrians.

Their internal organization was tribal and without any strong ties. In the face of the Avars, Mongols, and other nomadic peoples of the East, they were unable to resist, except to join in their campaigns, taking advantage of their prey. Meanwhile, after their withdrawal or defeats, such as those of the Avars and Mongols from Byzantium in the 5th and 6th centuries, they will return to their tribal organization, so that they could independently and in groups head towards the imperial lands, crossing the Danube in the northern part, where they will first have to deal with the Thracians and later with the Dardanians and Illyrians, without excluding peripheral encounters with the Greeks, with some authors seeing them to have penetrated to Thessaloniki and the Aegean, where they will suffer losses, to appear again after two centuries. Scattered and often contradictory data, however, speak of many eastern tribes, who from time to time, as mercenaries, were put in the service of the Empire, withdrawing to parts beyond the Danube. Various Byzantine chronicles are full of such notes, many of which, later, especially from the nineteenth century onwards, have been used for one-sided detached tableaux, which have clearly obscured the historical reality of that time.³⁷⁹

Historical data, however, connect the first Slavic penetrations into the imperial space, mainly in the Illyrian-Dardanian-Thracian and later in the Illyricum, when they will eventually be placed as settlers by Emperor Heracles, with the Avars and participation in the wars of this numerous nomadic Turkic people, who, after being attacked by the western Turks of Turkmenistan and expelled from there, with their movements put into action almost all the Slavic tribes, including also Huns and Goths, in the direction of the Empire and Western Europe. In their campaign to the West the Avars destroyed the Gepids (567), and after the Longobards retreated to Italy, they settled on a plain where, a little over a century later, Attila the Hun resided.³⁸⁰

In the conquering wars of the Avars against the Empire (572-591), with the Avars crossing the Danube from two directions (the northern one penetrating to the depths of Illyricum) and the southern (reaching as far as Thessalonica), and in the final war against Constantinople, where in 626 they would finally be defeated, the Slavs were part of the Avar army, although whenever the Avars reached an agreement with the Byzantines, they tried to punish them, through savage campaigns, after which the Slavic tribes retreated across the Danube, waiting for new for them to attack the empire.³⁸¹

Beograd, 1995; Mišić, Siniša: *"Humska zemlja u srednjem veku"*, Beograd, 1990; Dinić, Mihajlo: *"O nazivima srednjovekovne srpske drežave (Sklavonija, Srbija, Rashka)"*, Beograd.

³⁷⁹ *"Spisi Dimitrija Katakuzena i Vladislava Gramatika"*, Beograd, 1993.

³⁸⁰ See Jireček, K.: *"Historia e serbëve"*, Tiranë 2010, p. 112.

³⁸¹ See Ostrogorski, Georg: *"Historia e Perandorisë bizantine"*, Tiranë 2002, pp. 61-63.

According to many Byzantine sources, the Slavs surpassed even the Avars in terms of cruelty (plunder). In Illyricum and Thrace, in addition to numerous destructions, they began also to force the movement of the local population from their own lands.³⁸²

Concerning the Slavic cruelty, the bishop of Syria, Johanes of Ephesus, speaks with great concern saying that “the accursed Slavic people have devastated the whole country in Hellada, in the province of Thessaly, and in Thrace, where they have been plundering everything for four years. They live without being disturbed or frightened by looting, killing and burning, they have become rich and possess gold and silver, herds of horses and many weapons.”³⁸³

Indeed, the interaction of Slavic tribes with the Avars and their participation in the ongoing campaigns against the Empire, especially in Illyricum and Dardania, which lasted for nearly half a century, viewed from the perspective of the history of Illyricum and Dardania within the Byzantium Empire, has a special meaning. It shows the social and political circumstances that preceded the weakening of the Dardanian-Illyrian factor as well as their ethnicity within a civilization within which during the centuries they had deposited their entire power and knowledge to return to its foundations.

However, a permanent residence of the Slavs in Illyricum can only be traced back to the 7th-10th centuries, after having been originally settled by Emperor Heracles in some parts of Thrace and Illyria. The permanent presence of Slavic tribes in Illyricum is known for their settlements such as “*Slavinen*” (Σκλαβιναί) in Greek and “*Sclavenia, Slavonia*” and more rarely “*Sclavinica*” in Latin from where springs a differentiation from what Nikephris Bryennios called “people of the Slavs” (Σλαβινῶν εἶδος). Then Michael Rhetor of Thessaloniki, around 1072, calls them “*Slavinen*”, whereas, Niketas Akominatos (around 1204), in the “*Slavic people*”, in the western part of Illyricum, sees mainly the “*Dalmatians*”.³⁸⁴

If it can be conditionally accepted that the core of the Slavic tribal organization with the Zhupans and feudal lords from the ninth century onwards is mainly related to Zakhlumina, Neretva and Travurnia in Central Bosnia,³⁸⁵ the emergence of the Nemanjide dynasty in Dioclea (Zenta and Zeta) as well as its spread in the 11th century by this part of Rascia (ancient Rasen), as well as its strengthening in the next two centuries in the south-east direction, brings uncertainty in the process of further ethnic differentiation, when some of them are Croats, Slovenes and Serbs, with whom specific social and political identities are related within the Empire. This is true of the Rascian Nemanjid dynasty, because their origins, according to Byzantine authors, is mainly related to the Triballi,³⁸⁶ an ancient people, living in the province of Moesia between the Morava and Danube rivers, but also in Pannonia and Travurni, where their traces have been preserved,³⁸⁷ which a large part of the Serbian

³⁸² On the behavior of Slavs in the parts of Illyricum and Thrace see for more: Jenkins, R.J.H. “*Byzantium and Byzantinism*”; Johannes Biclariensis in Mon. Germ., Auctores antiq. 11, 214-215; Johannes von Ephesos VI, “*Kleine Schriften*”, 25; Vasiljev A: “*Viz. Vrem.*” 5.

³⁸³ See Michael, P: “*Chronique de Michelle Syrien*”, Paris 1905.

³⁸⁴ See Jireček, K.: “*Historia e serbëve*” 2, Tiranë, 2010, p. 100.

³⁸⁵ See: Porphyrogenitus, Constantinus: “*De Thematibus et de Administrato Imperio*”, Bonnae MDCCXL; Orbin M: “*Il Regno degli Slavi hoggicarrottament detti sclavoni*”, 1601; Relja Novaković: “*Gde se nalazia Srbija od VII-XII veka*”; Stanojević, M: “*Byzant und die Serben*”, Beograd, 1893; Manojlović, S: “*Das Adriatische Küstengebiet im 9 Jahrh.*”, Beograd 1902; Svejović, Dragan: “*Balkanski istočnjaci Milana Budimira*”, Beograd, 2001.

³⁸⁶ See: Chalconcandylae, Leonici: “*Historiarum Demonstrationes*”. The Byzantine chronicler mentions the Triballi and Triballia on pp. 14,19,20,23,27,30, 49,67,75, 146, 161, 176, 177 and 278; Cristobulos: “*Imbriotae Historiae*”, ed. D.R. Reinsch, Berlin, New York 1983, pp. 27,85,94,96,98); Dölger, F- Karayannopoulos, J: “*Byzantinische Urkundenlehre*”, München, 1965. Johannes Biclariensis in Mon. Germ., Auctores antiq. 11, 214-215; Johannes von Ephesos VI, “*Kleine Schriften*”, 25; Vasiljev A: “*Viz. Vrem.*” 5.

³⁸⁷ Various ancient sources, from those provided by Herodotus in “*Historiae*” and Arrius, Flavius Lucius in “*Aleksandria Anabasis*” and “*Scripta minova et fragmente*”, the extension of the Triballi, along the course of the river Morava to the Danube in the part and in the upper part in the east, see also presented in the part of Pannonia, the course of the Sava up to the Neretva. *Travunija* is called *Trivalija*. The name *Triballi* is preserved in many toponyms and hydronyms of Bosnia and

historiography stubbornly continues the conversion of the Triballi into Serbs,³⁸⁸ although they have no genetic ties to Serbs or any other proximity other than the same geographical area,³⁸⁹ while by ancient and Byzantine authors they are seen as “Illyrian branches”³⁹⁰ whose presence is quite natural, especially in an ethnic aspect, and in further developments, despite the loss of the role they had in antiquity, when they were last mentioned after the defeat by Philip of Macedon, during his campaign in Illyricum and Thrace in 344/3.³⁹¹

However, evidently, the conversion of the Triballi into Serbs in a most brutal anti-scientific form, has to do with the many uncertainties surrounding the medieval Serbian “state” and medieval Serbia, which as such are not excluded by some critical Serbian author,³⁹² the clarification of which brings out a different view of the very creation of the Serbian state in the ninth century outside its historical realm and ethnic space.

MACEDONIA AND DARDANIA DURING BULGARIAN INVASIONS

In addition to the known invasions of the Slavic barbarian tribes from the north, flowing down from the Carpathians and mostly accompanied with Avars, Huns and others across the Danube, from where in the time of Emperor Heracles, as a “shield against barbarians”, a good part of them remain forever in Thrace and Illyricum, however, around the end of the seventh century, another barbarian people crossed the Danube and rushed towards Illyricum with an intent to plunder. These people were called Bulgarians and were associated with the Huns and the awesome Avars.

Posavina. Thus, Triball is called a hill on the outskirts of Crkvenica, *Tribion* - a village near Benkovci, *Tribija* - near Visokos in Bosnia, *Trebinal* - a mountain near Mostar, etc. (See: Zivojin, Andreja: *Vladari Tribala*, 1979 and “*Rača i okolina*”). This author, among the few ones so far, also sees genetic links between the Triballi and the Nemanjaj. The Triballi as an insurmountable historical and ethnic reality in the area of present-day Serbia and a large part of the Peninsula from antiquity to the Middle Ages, is also dealt with by Milorad Stojić. In his book “*Трибали у археологији и историјским изворима*” (“*Triballs in archeological and historical sources*”), 2017, provides a complex picture of this powerful ancient people and its developed civilization, traces of which are still found in present-day Serbia, although many of them have been treated one-sidedly “as Thracians” or Dacians.

³⁸⁸ Converting the Triballis to Serbs, along with Cirković, Novaković and other authors, has recently been dealt with by the historian M. Nikolić, who says that “the ancient authors when referring to the Triballs had in mind the Serbs”! (See: Nikolić Maja: “*The Byzantine Writers on Serbia*”, Beograd, 2010, pp. 41-69). This non-scientific view nevertheless finds support in volume 6 of the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia, “*Vizantinski izvori za istoriju Jugoslavije*”, Belgrade, 1986, where the data of the Byzantine authors about the Triballi of Chalconcandylae, Christobulus, Dukas, and others are constantly “Triballi - means Serbs! The brutal method of converting the Byzantine peoples to Serbs continues even with the Celts, who, in the Southern Encyclopedia, everywhere, in parentheses, appear as Serbs!

³⁸⁹ See: Стојић, Милорад: “*Трибали у археологији и историјским изворима*”, Београд, 2017, pp. 36,68, where he says that the oldest people of today’s Serbia, although there is no evidence that they had any historical connection or point of contact with the Serbs, have mastered the main crossroads, which connected the west with the east. This people had a high civilization and strong state, ending by Philip of Macedonia in 343 BC.

³⁹⁰ The Byzantine chronicler Chalconcandylae says that the Triballi are an “Illyrian branch”. He describes them as “the oldest and strongest people in the world”. He says that “Triballi, Myzes, and Illyrians speak the same language” (“*Historiarum Demonstrationes*” I, pp. 23-24,30). The Byzantine chronicler, on this occasion introduces the Triballi and Triballia as involved in Mehmed’s campaign in this part, saying that “Mehmed attacked the Triball lands in 1439 and on this occasion married the daughter of the prince of the Triballi, Mara” (“*Historiaarum Demonstrationes*”, II, pp. 280-289). Critobulos also speaks of the “*Triballi and Triballi places*” in Northern Thrace, from the Upper Myzia and the Hem Mountains to Istria, which they shared with the Dacian and Paeonian lands. While talking about the conquests of Mehmed the Conqueror, he says that “*the sultan attacked Triballina in 1455, because from Triballia he easily attacked the Peonies and the Dacians*”. Cristobulos also talks about the many natural resources of the Triballi land with gold, silver, and others and praises the “young and beautiful Triballi” population. (“*Imbriotae Historiae*”, Berlin-New York, 1983, pp. 94, 96 and 156). While N. Grigor calls Dushan a “*Triballi king*” (“*Byzantinina Historia*”, ed. Bekkerus, Bonnae, 1855). Simeon, bishop of Thessaloniki, says also that “Mehmed I fought against the Triballi in Ohrid” (Beifur: “*Simeon of Thessakonica*”, pp. 50, 51 and 131,132.)

³⁹¹ Chalconcandylae: “*Historiarum Demonstrationes*” I, pp. 23-24, 30).

³⁹² Новаковић, Рела: „*Где се налази Србија од VI-XII до века*“, Београд, 1981.

Evidently, the first group of Bulgarians who crossed the Danube in 679, managed to conquer the territories between the Danube and the Illyrian mountains. Initially, the Byzantine Empire did nothing to prevent this, being involved in war with Arabs. But soon after reaching an agreement with the Arabs, Emperor Constantine IV realized the new threat coming from the north and began work to deal with the Bulgarians before they crossed the Danube. In fact the Bulgarian Kingdom or Anoguro-Bulgarian, with which the Byzantine Empire had reached friendly relations in the service of Heracles, headed towards the West out of pressure from the Hazars, a people becoming increasingly dominant in the central part between the Carpathians and Ukraine. Thus, a large group of Bulgarians, under the leadership of Asparukh, led the way and in the seventies appeared in the Danube delta. Emperor Constantine IV went out to meet the Bulgarians across the Danube to stop them in that part, though there the army remained trapped in the swampy parts, from where they fell prey to the Bulgarian attacks suffering defeat. Thus, the failed expedition of Constantine IV, unprepared for a war with an adversary who still struggled with the logic of rapid plunder and unpredictable movements, did nothing but pave the way for the Bulgarians to take the last step, crossing the Danube and occupying Varna.³⁹³

Under these circumstances, the Bulgarian state was established, based in the southern region of the Danube (called Moesia in the Roman period), and began to expand south and west as far as space allowed. But the greater power of the Bulgarians increased after they began to mingle with the Slavic population. It is about a complete mixture of the Bulgarian and Slavic populations, between an Indo-European (Slavic) people and another non-Indo-European one, or between the white and the yellow Tatar-Mongol race. The latter appeared in the role of a military and political elite, while the Slavs, as a mass, - in their service.³⁹⁴

However, it cannot be said that the Bulgarian state of Asian origin became a Slavic state, hence the one-sided assessments that this implies “the first genuine Slavic state in Illyricum”.³⁹⁵

Indeed, the autonomous Bulgarian state in Illyricum was a phenomenon of a mixture of different Euro-Asian races, though not united by the language factor (a Bulgarian-Daco-Slavic mixture) as well as Christianity, from the 9th and 10th centuries. At the beginning of the adoption of Christianity, Bulgaria sought to strengthen and even secure a link between Rome and Constantinople, exactly what Illyricum had between the eastern and western parts from the time of Diocletian to that of Justinian, when balances of the Empire were being preserved and tested. Empire. With Boris, who was recognized as king by Byzantium, converting to Christianity, Bulgaria became a Christian state, with a church partially independent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This was a new phenomenon that the Byzantines needed, especially when realizing that Boris, in addition to the Eastern Church, had established parallel relations with the Church of Rome. To prevent any stronger ties with Rome, the Church of Constantinople allowed them their own church, organized by archbishops and bishops.

Despite this, Boris repeatedly tried to put the Western Church at risk for double benefits in order to gain a special status in the West. When he failed to do so, he returned to Greek influence and sent his son Simeon to Constantinople to study Greek. Simeon replaced his father after he retired to a convent, where he died shortly afterwards. Of course, Simeon (897-923) succeeded in strengthening the Bulgarian Kingdom in Illyricum and making it

³⁹³ About the role of the Bulgarians as military and political elites as well as the Slavs in their service see: Ёиречек, Константин: *"Истрия на Българи"*, София, 1928; Мутапчиев, П: *"История на българиите"*, София, 1934.

³⁹⁴ For more on the “Slavic character” of the Bulgarian state see Ostrogorski, Georg: *"Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine"*, Tiranë 2002, p. 83.

³⁹⁵ See: Мутапчиев, П: *"История на българиите"*, София, 1934; Златарски, В: *"Българска Исветация в хрониката на Симеон Метатраста и Логотет"*, София 1908; Schevill, Ferdinand: *"Iliriku – historia dhe qytetërimi"*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 91.

independent of Byzantium, whereupon he also brought into play the Holy See. He also established the Bulgarian state and cultural identity through the Bulgarian church.

As such, the Bulgarian Kingdom reached the part of Illyricum, extending its conquests through Dardania and Macedonia, which are known to have been administered from the East, but were under the jurisdiction of the Holy See. Although this situation had already ended with the 8th Congress of Constantinople in 870, when the conquered Illyrian lands passed to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Bulgarians had shown a willingness to preserve the western affiliation of the Dardanian church, if they turned it in favor of their relations with the Holy See, which they wished to preserve as separate. Some of Boris's connections with the representatives of the Holy See are well known, being intended to be of the greatest benefit. As he realized that in these games between the Eastern and Western Churches the most important thing was the connection with Constantinople, where he could at the same time secure political and ecclesiastical power, King Boris, faced with great Byzantine military pressure, would eventually turn towards the eastern church, from where he managed to move the center of the state together with that of the church to Illyricum, that is, to Ohër, where the ecclesiastical center of the Holy See had been during the last three centuries connected with Dardania which, from an administrative and ecclesiastical point of view, from the reforms of Diocletian onwards, had completely absorbed the part of ancient Macedonia. Thus, what was once Justiniana Prima for the Holy See will become the Ohër Bishopric for the Bulgarians.

Before this could happen, King Boris (852-879) had to extend his power to these parts. This happened with the inclusion in his conquests of the stripe between the river Devoll and Vjosa. So the castle of Devoll and Puleropolis (Berat) became the bases of the Bulgarian power in the coastal belt of Illyricum.³⁹⁶

Boris' son, Simeon, followed on his father's footsteps. He turned to further conquests. Thus, in the time of Simeon, Bulgaria reached its widest extent in Illyricum (in Dardania and Macedonia). With the exception of Durrës and Shkodra, Simeon conquered all areas in southern Illyricum. To the south he took Vlora and a good part of the Nicopolis Theme.

In this endeavor, Simeon turned to the Holy See, convinced that by his side he would gain an even more powerful position. In 891 he made a connection with the Formosa, from which he sought a royal crown (Bulgarians call it imperial), which the Holy See quickly granted him.³⁹⁷

With the support of the Holy See and the strengthening of positions in other parts of the Empire, where he had extended his power, Simeon demanded that his power be crowned with the conquest of Constantinople, because the peace tribute that the Byzantine Empire paid him annually in accordance with the peace treaty of 896, seemed to not suffice for him. The reason for this action, however, Empire's poor governance, when at the head of the Empire, after the death of Leo VI in 912, came the light-minded Alexander, who refused to pay the tribute, which Simeon saw fit to attack the Byzantine capital. The fate of the war smiled on the Bulgarian after Alexander's death, while his place as regent of his six-year-old son was taken over by Patriarch Nicholas I Mystikos, who managed to exploit the lack of military competence with that of diplomatic power, enticing Simeon in negotiations, by which he

³⁹⁶ See: Jiriček, Konstadin: "*Historia e Serbëve*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 256; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 218; Runciman, S: "*A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*", London 1930; Златарски, V: "*Историята на България състоянието на Средновековието*" I, София, 1918.(Zlatarski, V: "*Istoriyata na Bŭlgariya sŭstoyaniето na Srednovekovieto*" I, Sofiya, 1918.)

³⁹⁷ See Forverial, Zhan Klod: "*Historia e Shqipërisë*", Tiranë 2004, faqe 140; Runciman, S: "*A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*", London 1930.

would be allowed to enter Constantinople, where he would be crowned co-emperor, and would receive this crown from the Patriarch's hands.³⁹⁸

Simeon's satisfaction to become a co-emperor without a war did not last long. After returning to Bulgaria and the large concessions made to him, great unrest broke out in the capital, which led to the overthrow of Patriarch Nicholas, who was overthrown by Empress Mother Zoe, who declared the agreements with Simeon null and void.³⁹⁹

The new situation has once again prompted Simeon to launch a major campaign against Byzantium, claiming to eventually seize the imperial crown. Again he undertook a military campaign, achieving its greatest success by breaking the imperial military fleet in the Black Sea, from where he again climbed the walls of Constantinople, which he failed to overcome, although this time he had the Arabs as his allies. Unable to succeed militarily, in 924, Simeon accepted negotiations with Roman I, who again offered him the imperial crown, valid only for Bulgarian territory. This caused him to take revenge on some of the hidden allies of Byzantium from the ranks of the Slavic zhupans, especially that of Zakhlumia, who played a double game with the two churches. With ambitions to extend his power to the extent that Byzantium was defined by the Western Empire, that is, beyond Western Illyria, Simeon faced Tomislav of Croatia, whereupon his army suffered a sudden but profound defeat, the real causes of which were never agreed upon knowing what the ratio of forces between the warring parties was in fact. However, in 924, Simeon was forced to sign peace with the Croats, hoping to compensate for this loss soon with another campaign against Constantinople, which remained only a wish, as he died shortly afterwards.⁴⁰⁰

With Simeon's death, the rapid disintegration of what appeared to be an autonomous Bulgarian kingdom under the Byzantine crown began. But, as seen earlier, the Bulgarian occupation of Illyricum (Dardania and a good part of Macedonia) influenced the spread of a Bulgarian-Byzantine culture, which went to the detriment of the Catholic-Western one, which had enjoyed a church of its own from the time of Constantine the Great and especially from the time of Justinian, who had linked the Illyrian bishopric to Justiniana Prima, as a vicariate, with the Holy See, and as such would remain for more than three years centuries.

Its main instigators were brothers Cyril and Methodius, as well as the missionary Clement of Ohër, who in the part of Ohër, Korça, Devoll, Berat, and beyond in the direction of Macedonia and Dardania, worked for years to open schools and Bulgarian churches. This activity was made possible after Bulgaria turned Ohër into the center of the independent Bulgarian patriarchate.⁴⁰¹

However, what can be called Bulgarian-Byzantine culture in Illyricum has to do with the spread of Christianity among the Slavic peoples that went through an internal race between the patriarch of Constantinople and the Holy See for the fullest possible spread of their influence, as they had spread from Illyricum to Moravia and the Czech Republic and were in a state of transition from paganism to monotheism. This missionary work will include the Greek Church, which accepted the call of the Prince of Moravia, Rastislav, who asked Constantinople Christian missionaries to help spread Christianity in these parts by means of a liturgy understandable to them.

The reasons why the Moravian prince sought Byzantine missionaries had to do with political ones, as he sought a counterweight to the threat of a Franco-Bulgarian siege. The fact that the Byzantine political and ecclesiastical leadership entrusted the important mission to the Thessaloniki brothers, Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius, and that in the Slavic lands he

³⁹⁸ See Ostrogorski, Georg: *"Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine"*, Tiranë 2002, p. 176; Litavrin: *"Bolgarija i Vizantija v XI-XIII vv"*, Moskva 1960; Herrin, Judith: *"Byzantium"*, Munchen, 2008.

³⁹⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰⁰ See: Sisič, P: *"Geschichte der Kroaten"* I, Zagreb 1917; Dögler: *"Bulgarisches Zartum und byzantinisches Keisertum"*, in Bull. De L'Institut archeolog. Bulgare 9/1935.

⁴⁰¹ Idem, p. 218.

preached the new religion in a Slavic language, it is an indication of its foresight, to act in the spread of Christianity in the great Slavic world beyond the borders of the Empire in a more seductive way for barbarian peoples who were not able to transcend from one state of mind to another in Latin, but in the native language and without any fanatical rules as required by the Catholic rite.⁴⁰²

The Eastern Church in this respect was much more practical, compared to that of Rome, which had Latin as its main code of liturgy and writing. Consistent with this attitude, which was more political than religious, but still emancipatory, Constantine (Cyril) created a Slavic alphabet, the so-called Glagolic alphabet, and later introduced the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Slavic (in the Slavic-Bulgarian dialect).⁴⁰³

The mission of Cyril and Methodius and their activity in favor of the spread of the liturgy in Slavic in the parts where Greek was predominant, after being expelled from Moravia precisely because the language of their liturgy appeared as part of heresy, as it excluded Latin as a universal code, also affected Illyricum. The missionary work of Cyril and Methodius in favor of a fictional liturgy called the old ecclesiastical language (a well-undefined Bulgarian-Slavic linguistic mixture) coincided with the Bulgarian attacks on southern Illyricum. On this occasion, Boris of Bulgaria, after converting to Orthodoxy, whereupon he managed to secure an independent church from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, founded the Bulgarian Archdiocese in Ohër in 870, where brothers Cyril and Methodius will be seen to act with their center in the monastery of Kutmicevica.⁴⁰⁴

The activity of Cyril and Methodius and subsequently of Clement and Naum,⁴⁰⁵ though ecclesiastical, did not go unnoticed in the outlines but also in the well-known race of the Eastern Church over the Western one. Thus, initially encouraged by the Byzantine Church, to prevent the Franco-Bulgarian influence in Illyricum, where the campaign for the Christianity of the Slavs was taking place, the Bulgarians will be involved, being already in the dynamics of the conquests towards the western parts of the Empire, which were well received by the Holy See, which tried to gain the Bulgarian factor over on its side in order to weaken Constantinople.

In fact, this will happen after the establishment of the Bulgarian archdiocese in Ohër, with Simeon turning it into a spiritual and political center from which, with the support of the Holy See and the blessing he received from it, he managed to remove it, by also excluding the influence of the eastern church with the departure of the Greek bishops and the appointment of those who came from the teachings of Clement and Naum, especially the latter, who on a hill south of Lake Ohër, in the ruins of an early basilica, a monastery was erected, where it will eventually be settled.⁴⁰⁶

Despite the missionary work of Cyril and Methodius and their students Clement and Naum, which is more or less proven as known, as they have left behind cultural traces with which the South Slavs and those of the West are connected, the story of the transition from one Christian rite to another by the Slavs is followed by numerous behind-the-scene developments, some of which are known. Especially those related to the great race of the Greek and Latin churches, which were close to the Slavs, whose believers they tried to take

⁴⁰² Kulakovski, J. *“Istoria Vizantii”*, Kijev, 1915, p. 161.

⁴⁰³ See: *“Турило и Методује”*, Српска Књижевна Задруга, Београд, 1964 and Splawinski, T: *“Zyoty Konstantyna i Metodego”*, Poznan, 1959.

⁴⁰⁴ See: Dvornik, F: *“Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IX siecle”*, Paris 1926; Jacques, Edwin: *“Shqiptarët”*, Tiranë, 179.

⁴⁰⁵ Naum of Ohri (Saint Naum) was a student of Cyril and Methodius involved in spreading the old ecclesiastical alphabet called Slovene used in the church liturgy alongside that in Greek. He was joined by Clement in this mission. Following troubles they encountered with Catholic missionaries, King Boris took them under protection creating conditions for them for establishing the “Ohrid School”. Naum died in 910 and was buried at the Ohri Monastery which he established in 895. The Bulgarian Church declared Naum saint. (*“Турило и Методује”*, приредно Ђорђе Трифуновић, Београд, 1964).

⁴⁰⁶ See: Faverial, Zhan Klod: *“Historia e Shqipërisë”*, Tiranë 2004, p. 141; Gjini, Gaspër: *“Skopsko-prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća”*, Zagreb 1986, p. 77.

over under their influence. Thus, many Slavic princes and presidents accepted the new religion, not because of the divine promises it brought, nor because they changed them spiritually, but because of the appropriate political conditions and the good benefits they gained by accepting the new religion which turned them politically factorized.

However, as it turned out, the spread of Christianity among the Slavs was almost entirely driven by the Bulgarian element, which for a short time succeeded turning from a barbaric people penetrating from the north, after having accepted Christianity, albeit formally at first, into a very important social and political factor with which the fate of Byzantium will be connected to the extent that in the time of Samuel the Empire was compelled to pay tribute to.⁴⁰⁷

But their arrival and settlement in Illyricum also influenced Illyricum and the wrinkled part of the Arbërians to be involved in a social and political development characterized by a fierce power struggle between the Bulgarians, seeking to expand and dominate over Illyricum and Byzantium, which tried to preserve, but also transform the administrative and social identity within the political realities of a Slavo-Orthodox world, already supervised by the Church of Constantinople, which did its best to always turn ever more towards the East and against the West. Eventually, in this development, it will be precisely the administrative structures of Byzantium, the *themes*, as an organizational form established from the time of Emperor Heracles onwards, (by means of which, the former power of the principalities of the time of Justinian was replaced by that of administrative-military governance and strictly supervised by the center), those that would forewarn the return of local government and its use for the extraction of autonomous leadership structures (from zhupans to independent despots), which, once they appear, will bring about the weakening, disintegration and decline of Byzantium.

When it comes to the spiritual question and the movement of the Bulgarian rule in Illyricum (in the province of Macedonia, which from the administrative and spiritual point of view was melting into the Dardanian ethnicity), it must be said that the full involvement of the ecclesiastical dioceses of Illyricum, till then associated with the Holy See, under the jurisdiction of the church of Constantinople, made by the decision of the Eighth Council of 830, brought about the emergence of the sect of the Bogomils, savage enemies of the church.⁴⁰⁸

The doctrine of the founder, Priest Bogomil, was triggered by the doctrine of the Messiahs, especially the Nevlikans, who, after being massively displaced in Thrace by the Byzantine government, lived in close contact with the Slavic population of Bulgaria. The further spread of the Bulgarian Empire in Illyricum, especially in the direction of the West, allowed Bogumilism to spread to these parts as well. Thus, in the space of present-day Bosnia, they created a powerful center from where its teachings sprang toward the West and South.

The Bogumil Center was preserved until the arrival of the Ottomans in these parts, whereupon many of the believers of the sect, in order not to fall under the oppression of the Christian dogma, from which they had long since departed, accepted Islam, joining the

⁴⁰⁷ Йиречек, Константин: "*Истрия на Българи*", София 1928; Мутапчиев, П.: "*История на българите*", София, 1934.

⁴⁰⁸ *Bogumilism* represented a dualistic doctrine, according to which the world was governed by two principles: *Good* (God) and *Evil* (Satan), and the struggle between these two opposing powers determines all world events and every human life. The whole visible world is the work of Satan, so he tends to be Evil. Like their Oriental predecessors, the Bogomils promoted a strictly spiritual religious life and a strictly ascetic lifestyle. They resolutely rejected every external cult, every ecclesiastical rite, and the whole ecclesial organism. The Bogomil uprising against the official church was at the same time an uprising against the very existing centuries-old order, which had found in the church the strongest spiritual support. The Bogumil movement was an expression of protest against the rulers, the powerful and the rich. Bogumilism had deep roots in Bulgaria and especially in Macedonia. It had a great influence far beyond the borders of the Bulgarian Empire and appeared under different names in Byzantium, Bosnia, Italy, and the southern part of the Frankish kingdom.

Shiites, as a belief that offered them an opportunity to preserve the philosophy and spiritual dualism that could be associated with Eastern mysticism and Western philosophy, which preserved the concepts of the struggle between good and evil.⁴⁰⁹

Despite the bogumil sect and their influence, after a time subjugation to the Byzantine Empire, when King Samuel (Samuil - 976-1014) came to the Bulgarian throne, under his rule, the center of the Bulgarian state moved from the East, to Preslavia, Prespa and Ohër where he also had his own episcopate. It was the first time that the territories of Illyricum, within the Byzantine *themes*: Durrës and Nicopolis, were involved in the long Bulgarian-Byzantine conflict with serious consequences for the country, as they turned into a war ground, which left behind great destruction, and above all social and political insecurity.

In these circumstances, when Samuel had included in his kingdom parts of the province of Macedonia up to Thessaloniki and had united the old Bulgarian territory between the Danube and the Illyricum mountain ranges, where Thessaly was located, the *theme* of Nicopolis and Durres, together with that of Dioclea and Rascia in the north, the Illyrian-Dardanians and a good part of their space, which will later be known as Arbëria, will become an extremely important factor of the Kingdom. This was also reasonable, as they continued, as an ethnic group which, although suffering greatly from the Slavic invasions - shrinking from north to south, while the western Illyricum, not being included in the Italian and German possessions - within the *Themes* (that of Durrës and Nicopolis), had preserved their administrative and social subjectivity.⁴¹⁰

Aware of the importance of this founding factor of Byzantium, with the link between East and West still maintained, Samuel had made no attempt to overthrow these administrative-military structures. He had kept them and even strengthened them, because he maintained the necessary political balance with Byzantium, so it would recognize his power as a vassal. It is known that in Dioclea, he left the power to Prince John Vladimir, to whom he also offered the hand of his daughter, Kozara. In Durrës, after 997, Samuel had not touched upon the privileges and power of the city parish, represented by the powerful Crisilus family, John Crisilus, *proteuon* of the city. In the territory of Vlora and Berat, Samuel entrusted the command to the progeny of the noble local family, Elinger French. He also operated in Devoll, Kolonjë, Vagenetis, Skup, Naissus, Ulpiana and elsewhere.⁴¹¹

The “allies” that the Bulgarians had found in the *theme* of Durrës, Nicopolis and other parts from Dardania to Dioclea, despite the titles and properties preserved or acquired by them, did not affect them to be seen as permanent, as their rule showed no signs that it would help a social and political development that was consistent with the emergence of early feudalism. On the contrary, the progeny and noble families, who had been part of a dividing but also reconciling space between East and West, had economic benefits (free trade on both sides) but also of an exchange of ideas and other values, so in the circumstances when they will see that this suffocation could be overcome, they quickly join the Byzantine movement to restore power to these parts which had begun with the appearance of Basilus II (976-1025), who will also be called “Bulgarian killer” because of his cruelty and sadism he used against Bulgarian soldiers during the fighting with them. Several thousand soldiers who had been taken prisoner in Macedonia, were sent blinded to King Samuel in Perlep, where terrified by them he will die, and with this the disintegration of the Bulgarian Kingdom in Thrace, Illyricum and Dardania would begin.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ See: Beck, Hans G: “*Das Byzantinische Jahrtausend*”, München, 1991.

⁴¹⁰ For more see: Faverrial, Zhan Klod: “*Historia e Shqipërisë*”, Tiranë 2004, pp. 143-147; Златарски. В: “*Отговор за България в хрониката на Симеону Метамфрост и Логото*”, София 1908.

⁴¹¹ Idem.

⁴¹² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë 2002, p. 219.

And, if fate had an inevitable escalation of Illyricum - for better or for worse, as happened to King Boris on the occasion of his rise, or worse, as happened to the last king, Ivan Vladislav (1015-1018), this would be happen to the Bulgarian Kingdom when it tried to restore hegemony in its parts. The last Bulgarian king was killed in Durrës in February 1018, during an attack on the city. The Byzantine emperor Basilius II (Vasil) from Durrës turned to Ohër, the first Bulgarian spiritual capital, from where he would then extinguish one by one the centers of Bulgarian resistance at the heights of Tomorr, Vlora and Thessaly, which he would bring back to the Greek church.⁴¹³

Although Basilius II (Vasil) overthrew the Bulgarian Kingdom in Illyricum and Dardania, where it had reached its peak and from where it had inevitably fell, after having failed to turn into a balanced factor between East and West, but had originally intended to turn into a rival to the West with the aim of eradicating Byzantium, or to later take its place by turning it into a vassal, as soon as he regained Byzantine power in these parts, he was careful that this part of Illyricum retains the local administration structures from the time of Heracles and Leo III (*themes*), even adding new ones in accordance with the power they presented in the most strategic parts of Byzantium from which the Empire had to restore the power lost by the Bulgarians. Thus, in addition to the existing themes, that of Durrës and Nicopolis, Basilius II founded that of Scupi, which, as a strategist, he entrusted to the Dardanian patriarch, David Arianiti, who was one of the emperor's most prominent commanders against the Bulgarians.⁴¹⁴

This theme, which included the central parts which were the same as those of the province of Dardania determined by Emperor Justinian, for the great importance it had, rose to the rank of a *catepanate* and later that of a *ducat*. To the *catepanate* and later *duke* rank, the one of Durrës was also raised, which maintained the status of the most important strategic base of the Byzantine Empire on the Adriatic coast.

In addition to the themes as Dardanian-Illyrian governing institutions, Basilius II also began organizing other western parts of the Empire, so that they would be in the service of restoring Byzantine influence in these parts, and at the same time being able to prevent different influences, especially those of the Arabs and Turks in the East, who also managed to appear in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic. In line with these aims, Basilius II (Vasil) on established a theme on the Bulgarian lands, downstream the Danube, at *Paristrion*, or *Paradounabon*, with the capital Silistra, on the banks of the Danube. Later this theme arose to a *catepanate* and further to a *dukate*. Even the territory bounded by the Danube and Sava was organized into a Sirmin-centered theme. The Adriatic coast with Zara in the north and Ragusa in the south formed the theme of Dalmatia.⁴¹⁵

The territories of Diocletian, Zakhlumia, Bosnia and Rashia were not organized in themes, but together with Croatia, remained under local zhupans and thus formed non-genuine provinces, and zhupania (local government on family and tribal grounds interconnected by one or more of them) vassals to the Byzantine Empire.

Visibly, two of these themes, that of Dalmatia in the North and that of Scupi in the central part of Dardania, will be of particular interest, because they, beyond the known form of themes, which already had more than a hundred years of experience in these parts and presented the instruments of central government at the local level directly related to each other, *forewarned the emergence of formations of indigenous dynasties*, which will go as far as vassal principalities, which, in the new circumstances, after the arrival of the Slavs and their settling in these parts, especially after the Rashian penetrations in Dardania from the beginning of the 13th century to the 15th century, the new internal social realities are revealed

⁴¹³ Idem.

⁴¹⁴ For more on themes see: Ostrogorski, Georg: "*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*", Tiranë 2002, pp. 171, 205.

⁴¹⁵ Ostrogorski, Georg: "*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*", Tiranë 2002, p. 206.

by the autochthons and the invaders, but from these positions they also bring out the struggle for and against Byzantium, which from the beginning of the Crusades and the appearance of the Normans, it will take place with severity, with consequent disintegrating processes for two centuries.

FROM THEMES TO THE FIRST ARBËRIAN PRINCIPALITIES

The return of Byzantium to its space after the long Bulgarian rule, which, although it was gone, it left behind some new social and cultural realities affecting further developments, among which the seal of the eastern church throughout the country should be distinguished after its passage under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople as well as the violent change of ethnic structure in some parts of Illyricum by the settling of the Slavs. Having acquired large estates, they had become feudal lords, however, with the new organization of *themes* in Illyricum and Dardania (of the Danube and Scupi) and the permission of local *zhupanis* or despots (Zakhlumia, Bosnia and Rascia), they opened the question of a rivalry between the *autonomous rule*, based on despotates, whose bearers were mostly Illyrianized Slavic settlers or mixed with them, and *the local one* connected with the central power of the themes in which, enjoying the status of imperial citizenship of “*romaios*” were included as state-forming peoples of the Empire (Illyrians, Latins and Greeks), a rivalry that, evidently, will turn into a cause for weakening and, ultimately, for the fall of the Empire.

Indeed, the acceptance of the dual form of administrative organization of the country with centralist themes and despotates (local self-government), brought inevitable conflicts between them, as it was not a matter of “mixing” competencies between *themes* representing local government related to the center and local autonomies, but rather about changing the social position of the ruling classes, whose power was no longer measured administratively but by property. The *strategists* who led the *themes*, although high-ranking military men with merit for maintaining the country’s stability, had begun to lose power and also prestige over local feudal lords and despots, who acted independently within their feuds, where they were rapidly getting rich thus appearing as a true factor of power.⁴¹⁶

The reason for this great change was the social relations within Byzantium itself, which were related to the development of feudal relations in it and produced various consequences affecting the whole society, especially the middle and lower class, being expropriated from properties, which passed into the hands of the great feudal lords. Evidently, after the death of Emperor Basilius II and the end of the Macedonian dynasty, with Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) the era characterized by the small property of the *farmer-soldier* (*stratioti*) ended. This form of property, based on the concept of themes, where the main factor was the local military, in fact during the last two centuries had been the main pillar of Byzantine power in parts of Illyricum but also those of the Eastern Provinces, where the forms of administrative autonomies through the provinces established by Emperor Diocletian and continued by Constantine the Great reaching the highest level with Justinian’s reforms, had been replaced by a central military oversight. But during the Bulgarian occupation, when

⁴¹⁶ The *Strategists* were military men, whom the Empire appointed as theme administrators. They had military but also civilian power. Most ran the local administration and economy, but also carried the burden of military organization in line with Imperial interests. From the eleventh century onwards the role of strategists would decline, and so would the weakening of the central government in favor of the local despots (mainly Slavs), who appeared to be claiming independence from the Empire. (See: Georg, Timothy E: “*A History of Byzantium*”, Oxford, 2008).

violent changes took place in the composition of the population (the settlement of the Slavs in some parts and their economic factorization to the detriment of the natives by means of properties acquired by the invading wars), it had begun to lose the importance it once had.

Aware of this new reality, Emperor Basilius (Vasil), although he had restored the previous *themes*, that of Durrës and Nicopolis and added two more: that of Scupi (Skopje) and Dalmatia, which a little later would raise to the level of *catepanates* and *duces*, however the acceptance of local despotates (of Dioclea, Zakhlumia, Bosnia and Rascia) with mixed populations, dominated by Slavs rewarded with property since the time of Heracles and enriched during the Bulgarian occupation, it opened the rivalry between local autonomies - the latter and those of the central mechanisms of the local level - of the first, which, although rising to the level of *duces*, still deepened the gap between local feudal lords and the military and noble strata, supported by the empire and showing Byzantine inclinations. This shifted the center of power from the current factors to those that were not subject to either command or centralist direction, but rather to economic power, which absorbed it to the detriment of the impoverished social strata.⁴¹⁷

This development, which took the form of a pyramid, is reflected in the higher imperial circles and in its own structures with which the *current military power* fluctuates with that of the growing *feudal and bureaucratic aristocracy* of Constantinople, which needed finance, providing them with wealthy feudal lords, which was expected to lean on their side. While this change was immediately reflected in the strata of *farmers-soldiers (stratiots)*, who not only became poorer, but were losing all social importance, a thing that was understood as a state of discrimination of the local factor and imperial protector being a military stratum and as a favoring of the feudal factor by the Bulgarian-Slavic despots, strengthened in all respects to the detriment of the former.

This was enough for the themes of Durrës and Nicopolis to show their first signs of dissatisfaction, but also insurgent movements, which will be given good reason by the rise of George Maniakes, Commander of Sicily, who in 1043, in the war against the central government, with the help of troops, many of them coming from Arbëria, is proclaimed emperor. The Byzantine chronicler M. Attaliati says that with an army of Romans and Albanians (*ρομαιοι ω αλβανοι*), he landed in Durrës and, always according to the Byzantine chronicler, Maniakes, after achieving significant successes in Macedonia, on the road to Constantinople, turned to Thessalonica to take it, and of course he would have succeeded if it had not been for the unfortunate murder which befell him on the journey.⁴¹⁸

Maniakes' uprising severed Durres' *theme* relations with the central government, as it had already become a fertile ground for such events, where on the one hand relations with the empire were broken and on the other hand relations with local governments led by Slavic despots, who were getting stronger and stronger. This is best illustrated by a note by the 11th-century Byzantine historian Michele Attaliata, who states that at that time Arbërians, once ally of the Byzantine Empire (*symmachio*) became "suddenly" its opponents (*polemioi*).⁴¹⁹

What historian Attaliata says about the "allies" of the Byzantine Empire, who "suddenly" lost faith, that is, their turning into "opponents" (*polemioi*), seem more like a description than an expression of a deeper state, which will follow future reports of the imperial internal crisis. For, the issue of themes as well as their expropriation from power over a hundred years and the rise of the feudal aristocracy, which was a source of income but also a determinant of the balance of power, was also not a matter of ally-opposing relations, which varied accordingly under certain circumstances, but presented a difference on the one hand between those who felt the Byzantine Empire as part of their state consciousness, such as Arbërians (descendants

⁴¹⁷ See Ostrogorski, Georg: "*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*", Tiranë 2002, p. 205.

⁴¹⁸ See M. Attaleiatae "*Historia*", Bonnae, 1853, p. 18.

⁴¹⁹ Idem.

of the Dardanian-Illyrians) and the Greeks, who had built and developed to that scale and, on the other hand, of the conquerors from the east: Slavs, Bulgarians, and others who had begun invading the Empire from within and destroy it with claims to return it into their own empire. This will be done first by the Bulgarians and then by the zhupans of Zakhlumla, Tervunias and later by Rascia, as they will conquer it in the 12th to the 14th century (from Nemanja, Uroš II, Stefan and Dušan).⁴²⁰

They will fight by all means the central government of Byzantium, mostly with its crown, without hesitation to bring into play its opponents, especially the Western Empire, and the Ottomans themselves, with whom they will conclude numerous secret and later open vassalage agreements against Byzantium and also of the West in general.

This fact, largely deliberately ignored, brings to light the founders and conquerors of a great imperial edifice such as Byzantium, as well as its true defenders and destroyers, whose roles are not only often confused but also misinterpreted. Slavs and other barbarians coming from the north and east, quickly factorized by great human power, had never accepted the true imperial order, as it meant emancipation and submission to the state, to rules and laws, as required by social culture and creativity. That they were outside these concepts and wanted to stay true to barbaric tendencies is best illustrated by the very late acceptance of Christianity (from the ninth to the tenth century), although even after having accepted it, it was more a matter of its use for power, as the Empire had it too and Christianity was the inevitable co-ruler of any power that came “from below”, that is, from the population where it was empowered.

That Christianity will remain a tool for power, and even from this point of view, the weight will be increased, and this will be shown by the tendencies of the Slavic tribes and the Bulgarians to settle accounts with it, by moving from one church to another (from the eastern one to the west and vice versa), very pronounced separately from the middle of the tenth century onwards, precisely to those despots in Illyricum where the Slavs had already begun to factorize, (in Dioclea, Zakhlumia, Bosnia and Rascia), accepted and known by Byzantium after the overthrow of the Bulgarian kingdom by Emperor Basilius II.⁴²¹

Under these circumstances, the Slavic despots in Central Illyricum sided with each cross alternatively, mostly by forming alliances in favor of strengthening themselves and weakening the central government of Byzantium.

This situation culminated in the middle of the 11th century to turn into an open arena, where the interests of the East and the West clashed. It is no coincidence that in 1054 over this “race” the border of the division of the churches will pass, resulting not only on an alignment of the principalities in accordance with this boundary and its movement, but also on a fierce struggle for survival between Byzantium and the Western Empire, which with the emergence of the Crusades, will increasingly be transferred to this part, which will turn harsher and bloodier with the appearance of the Ottomans. The latter will not only be involved, but will also benefit from it, paving the way for their penetrations and invasions, affecting Byzantium from the beginning of the tenth century to become conquerors of these parts from the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards from where they will then turn to Central Europe.

At the forefront of these developments, so that Byzantium is protected by changing its leader from bottom up, Arbërians and their lands will be involved in the most important part of Byzantium, where the power of one or the other cross and with through this also the political relationship between East and West would be determined.

⁴²⁰ See: Porphyrogenitus, Constantine: “*Corpus Scriptoru, Historia Byzantinae*”, Bonnea, MDCCXI, pp. 168-173 and “*De Administrato Imperie*”, Washington, 1967; Harworth, H.H: “*The Spread of the Slavs*”, pp. 67-76.

⁴²¹ See: Stein, E: “*Untersuchungen zur spätbyzantinischen Verfassungs und Wirtschafts Geschichte*”, 1928; Vasiliev, A.A “*History of the Byzantine Empire*“, Madison 1952.

One of the first attempts by local military to pave the way for a power struggle was that of strategist Nicephorus Brienne. In 1077 he rebelled against Constantinople. This strategist was known for his imperial patriotism in the numerous wars he had waged against the Slavic zhupans in the North, including the war against the Norman ships in the Adriatic. Nicephorus proclaimed himself emperor and just as long ago Gregory George Maniakes left for Constantinople to bring down Emperor Michael VII Dukas. Along the way, other nobles joined in, and the expropriated *stratiotis stratum* of the *themes* sought bloody retribution for this. At the gates of Adrianople, he will be defeated by the imperial army commanded by Alexios Komnenos. Four years later, on April 4, 1081, A. Komnenos was proclaimed emperor of Byzantium.⁴²²

The entry of the famous imperial general on the Byzantine throne is made after an ordeal with a duke of Durrës, Nikephoros Basilakes, who had taken the place of Nikephorus Brienne. Speaking about the uprising that the duke of Durrës, Nikephoros, undertook in 1087 against Constantinople, he says that Roman, Bulgarian and Arvanites troops took part in his army, (Είχε ἄρα και ρωμαων στρατιωτικον, βουλγαρων τε και **αρβανιτων**).⁴²³

Another Byzantine chronicler, Georgios Kedrenos, talks about the participation of the Arbanites in the uprising of the Duke of Durrës. He says that “the Duke of Durrës gathered warriors from all over his country, who were joined by some French volunteers, sent by Bishop Theodorios of Deabolis (Devoll), who was in Italy”.⁴²⁴

Basilius (Vasil), as a representative of the Western military aristocracy in his efforts to take the throne of Constantinople, faced a military rival from the East, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, who succeeded, thanks to the support provided by Suleiman, nephew of Sultan Alp Arslan, to win the imperial throne.⁴²⁵

The support that Nikephoros Botaneiates the Elder received from the Turks and later that of Melisen actually made it easier for them to conquer Asia Minor, paving the way for a rapid penetration of Islam towards the West. Evidently, in a few moments, the church of Constantinople will use the Ottoman conquests to extend its influence to the detriment of the Roman church. With this it can be said that the historical suspicion begins, not without support, that the Eastern Church, in its fight against Catholicism, burdens the anathema of alliances both open and secret with the Turks, as a strategy that came to the fore especially by the vassalage of the Orthodox princes with the Ottomans after they penetrated Illyricum.

However, at around 1080 Suleiman oversaw the entire territory of Asia Minor, from Cilicia to Hellespont, where in this ancient Byzantine territory he founded the Sultanate of *Ar Rumi*, i.e. “*Roman Sultanate*”.⁴²⁶

It is important to note why the losses in the East, which will be irreversible and fatal, even Byzantium will seek to compensate by reforming beyond the Bosphorus, precisely in the Illyricum space, where already, with the creation of two new *themes* (that of Dalmatia and Scupi) and, especially with the permission of independent despots: Dioclea, Bosnia, Zaklumia and Rascia, the situation had changed markedly both by the crisis of the *themes*

⁴²² For more see: Leb, B: “*Niecephore III Botaniates (1078-1081) et Marie d’Lanie, Actes du VI Congres Intern. D’Etudes Byz.*” I/1950.

⁴²³ See M. Attaleiates : “*Historia*”, Bonnae, 1853, p. 18.

⁴²⁴ See Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e Shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 232.

⁴²⁵ See: Orstrogorski, Gerog: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë 2002, p. 243; Neumann: “*Die Weltstellung des Byzantinischen Reiches vor den kreuzzügen*”, Leipzig, 1894.

⁴²⁶ See: Laurent, J: “*Byzance et les origines du Sultanat Roum*”, 1930; Wittek, P: “*Deux chapitres de l’histoire des Turcs de Roum*”, 1936; Cohen, C: “*La premiere penetration turque en Asie Meneure*”; Laurent, J: “*Byzance et les origines du Soultanat Roum, Melanges Diehl*” I, 1930; Wittek, P: “*Deux chapitres de l’histoire des Turcs Roum*” in BYZ, II/1936; Cohen, C: “*La premiere penetracion turque en Asie Meneure*”.

and by the intervention of coastal states (Venice and Genoa) for as many allies as possible to new contenders on the Adriatic and Mediterranean coasts.⁴²⁷

Here we must not forget the complexity of the Holy See to attract Slavic zhupans and feudal lords and other local factors, who sought to take advantage of their game with the churches, although both these two issues shared dissatisfaction with the central government, though not the intentions, because the military aristocracy did not seek to overthrow Byzantium but rather take over the imperial throne, leading it in order to preserve its integrity for as long as possible. While the Slavic zhupans and princes sought to possibly turn it into a *Slavia*, or place it under the armpit of as many independent principalities as possible, without hesitation to contact the West for this.⁴²⁸

This development of various twists, which contained an internal drama like others before, challenged Illyricum even more, because after the division of the churches (1054) this line passed through its body, where the supporters and beneficiaries of Byzantium, will be subjected to a war waged between Byzantium and the West, which will take place in the circumstances of the beginning of the era of military feudalism, characterized by the expansion of conditional military property (*pronies*), with a very powerful “external” factor – Normans joining the play. The appearance of the Normans influenced the raging West to retreat, moving eastward, while Byzantium with much trouble confronted the new invaders from the West, who, together with those from the East (the Turks), created the conditions for it to collapse both from within and from the outside.

In this new development with many both visible and invisible actors on and behind the scene, the main protagonist remained Byzantium and its edifice doomed to collapse, as its time was running out, while on the clashing plain once again Southern Illyricum will appear, now as *Byzantine Arbëria*, where the West saw its decisive beginning toward the East, while the East saw a protective dam against the West, which had to be defended at all costs.

The administrative division into two parts (in the 4th century during the reign of Emperor Theodosius), as well as the latest one of the churches, was already turning into a social, cultural and political division among the greatest of the time, which would later turn into a border of the divisions of world civilizations.⁴²⁹

However, in this struggle, it was Emperor Alexios Komnenos (1081-1118), the most successful Byzantine general of all time, who, with the strengthening of the military aristocracy, managed to temporarily prevent the fall of the empire from dual pressure he faced (from the East, with the Turks, and from the West with the Normans), but could not avoid. With Komnenos’ actions, the already rusty Empire managed to withstand the contempt it experienced right in its heart, in Constantinople, after it had been invaded by Western crusaders and destroyed to the ground, though not entirely falling, which will come two centuries later from the Ottomans.⁴³⁰

As a well-known military man, Alexios Komnenos will also be a skilled diplomat in several ways to use the help of Western countries, especially the coastal powers of Venice and Genoa, to counter the Norman threat coming from the North, but also to exploit the euphoria of the Crusade movement, which erupted in European countries to liberate the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem, to prevent the Turks in the East, who had torn apart much of the Empire in Asia Minor, and the question was when they would approach Constantinople.⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ See Grosse, M: “*Römische Militär Geschichte von Gallienus zum Begin der byzantinischen Themerfassung*”, Berlin, 1920.

⁴²⁸ Herrin, Judith: “*Byzantium*”, Munchen, 2008.

⁴²⁹ See: Honigmann, E: “*Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071 nach griechischen, arabischen, syrischen und armenischen Quellen*” (Corpus Bruexellense Hist, Byz. III), Bruxelles, 1935.

⁴³⁰ See: Herrin, Judith: “*Byzantium*”, Munchen, 2008.

⁴³¹ See Chaladon, F: “*Essai sur le regne d’Alexios I Comnene (1081-1118)*”, Paris, 1900.

As the first issue - the Norman danger and dealing with it, and the second issue - the crusades (eight of them), with which Byzantium had to deal with for the next two hundred years becoming cause to its decline, the starting point was the central part of Illyricum, Dardania and ancient Macedonia, as well as Epirus and the coast, a space that will turn into a constant and extremely fierce war between Byzantium and the West.

CHAPTER THREE **BETWEEN BYZANTIUM AND THE WEST**

CATHOLIC CRUSADES AND RASCIAN GAINS

The inadequate condition of some Central Illyrian areas (formerly the territory of ancient Dardania and Macedonia), under the circumstances of the division of churches since the middle of the 11th century, began to change greatly after the defeat of the Bulgarian Kingdom and the emergence of the Normans and their powerful invasions from the northwest and southwest, when they conquered, one after another some of the weary European kingdoms in the north: English, then those of Spain, and finally the Mediterranean coastal kingdoms from Genoa to Sicily.

With the emergence of the Normans and their great will to conquer, European kingdoms and coastal cities from the north gain a new energy, reviving many of their formerly fading ambitions to move towards the expansion of power towards East. In order to put into action the will for new conquests, in collaboration with the papacy and the spirit of Catholicism which, compared to the Orthodox, was also in a long drawback, the Normans “rediscovered” the Holy Land, namely Palestine, and the tomb of Jesus Christ there, whereupon it had to be restored from the hands of the Seljuk Turks, into the hands of the Christians. Thus, the Normans, along with the Vatican and the republics of the Adriatic, as well as those of the Mediterranean, “discovered” the crusades for the return of the holy places in the East, and this will take on the dimensions of great waves of mobilization of all social strata from the North of Europe, especially those eager to turn the adventure into a means of profit, which will be involved in an unprecedented campaign to the East, a campaign that will last for more than a century and a half with seven big crusades, whose best “achievements” were the unprecedented devastations wherever they passed and the failure to turn the Holy Land under constant surveillance together with the Christian temples in Jerusalem.

Thus, it can be said that the time of the Crusades marks the time of the most savage outbursts, mostly leaving behind indelible traces of blood, whereas the values of Christian civilization themselves suffered greatly, especially those caused to Constantinople itself by two invasions during the fourth crusade. As for the Normans threatening from all sides, the Crusaders and their role to be played at least during the First Crusade (1097-1099), there are many signs that Alexios Komnenos, not only wanted it as such, but also that it provoked him in various forms, since the slogan of the “Holy War” for the liberation of the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem came from him. This slogan mobilized the broad strata of Christians across the old continent where Catholicism had the main say, with differences between the churches left behind, which were large and harmful to it, though it, at the same time, created circumstances

that all that great energy would flow into the East, against the Turks, so that with their settlement in Asia Minor, they would turn into a defensive dam.⁴³²

It seems that this will be motivating not only for the large layer of numerous adventurers, who could hardly wait to benefit from something, but it was also tempting for the feudal lords, who were calculating that in the eastern part of Asia Minor, where there were properties of large and climatic conditions for agriculture, would be enriched. This issue would have been the account of many Catholic clergy, who believed that the euphoria of the crusaders in the east should be used primarily to relocate a large part of the Catholics to those parts, which would be able to increase the influence of the western church in the East, which had already been completely excluded in those parts.

Before revealing the actions of the Crusaders and all the developments related to them and their behavior, it must be said that Byzantium will initially face the Norman challenge, which was neither new nor unknown, since they already had become masters of the Mediterranean, and that the Holy See, but also the coastal cities, were under the pressure of their conquests.

The Normans, as a vital force descended from the North after overthrowing or conquering one by one the old European kingdoms, will emerge in the Mediterranean. Led by the famous Robert Guiscard, who some time before, after having managed to unite all the possessions of the Norman princes of Southern Italy and establishing a powerful kingdom, immediately turned his eyes to the other side of the Adriatic. After all, for Guiscard, who had already openly expressed his claims for the Imperial crown of Byzantium, the main goal was to capture Durrës, which opened the gates to Constantinople.

For the countries in Western and Central Illyria, including the area of Epirus, Dardania and ancient Macedonia, and the circumstances in which the themes were originally located (independent administrative-military units under Byzantium, such as that of Durres in the 8th century and that of Nicopolis in the 9th century, Scupi and of Naissus in the eleventh / twelfth century) and later also the generosity and feudalism separated in both parts of the divided and already hostile Christian world, the Norman invasion and the beginning of the Crusades were of great importance. On one hand, it aroused the hope that the Normans had set in motion a great energy, which in the first place would be exploited to push the boundary of the division of the churches in the direction of the East, so that the space of the West and thus even that of Catholicism would reach as far as Constantinople and, on the other hand, would create an awareness that even Arbërians, already freed from the limits of the concept of *Romaïos* Byzantine citizenship, which had lost its true meaning and had almost fallen under the mercy of the Slavs, might become part of these changes seeing in them their own interest in accordance with the developments which will take an unstoppable direction. The Norman King Roger made no secret of his intention of restoring ancient Rome.⁴³³ This was in fact a matter of reckoning with the Eastern Empire rather than a struggle for the return of the Holy Sepulcher and Palestine, as found in the oath of the Crusades, which will all turn into a further rift between Christians.

In these circumstances, notably, the penetration of the Normans in Illyricum seemed to represent a positive development to end the stalemate of the Byzantine crisis reflected in the loss of authority of the central government replaced by the wars of feudal lords and local princes for greater power followed by insecurity and social crisis. This was reflected in the acceptance of the vassalage of the Normans by the local princes, starting from the counts of Durrës and moving to the North and the interior of the princely door of Dioclea, which agreed

⁴³² See: Neuman, C “*Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor des Kreuzzügen*”, Leipzig 1894; Schlumberger, G. „*Un empereur byzantin au X siecle*“, Paris, 1896; Vasiliev, A.. “*A History of the Byzantine Empire*“, Madison, 1952.

⁴³³ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 140

to join the Crusades on the condition that they ensure the extension of Catholicism to the east.⁴³⁴

As the new situation promised a removal of the dividing line, or at least pushing it deeper into the East, opening a good opportunity for overcoming and merging with the western part which in the circumstances emerging after the division of the churches, connected them much more naturally economically and politically with this part of the world rather than the eastern affiliation, which, from numerous wars and the emergence of numerous principalities, had begun to shrink, to no longer be of genuine imperial proportions. Such was the view of Pope Gregory VII's initiative, between the leaders of the Normans, Guiscard and Michael of Dioclea, where a military alliance was formed against Byzantium, which included several other Western Illyrian countries such as the Republic of Ragusa and the Kingdom of Croatia under the influence of the Catholic Church.⁴³⁵

Outside of this alliance remained Venice, which, although opposed to the return of Byzantium, also saw the strengthening of the Normans and their claims to become the masters of the East as a threat to its vital interests, especially as by their empowerment Genoa and other Mediterranean cities benefited, jeopardizing its position of monitoring navigation and trade in the Mediterranean, from where its goods circulated to and from Asia and Africa. As it will be seen, when the Normans began their landing in the rest of the Adriatic, the Venetian fleet responded to Alexios Komnenos' call to go to war against them, opening the way for some alliances that Byzantium could sign with them, though evidently in addition to a great bounty for Constantinople, they were followed by many consequences with the well-known tricks of the Adriatic naval republic behind, exploiting the situation without faltering to break them or condition them in accordance with its interests.

However, in May 1081 the Norman armies, led by Guiscard's son Boemund, landed in the bay of Vlora, from where they would conquer the city and then take Jericho and Kanina to reach Butrint, where they would join the armies of Guiscard, who had conquered Corfu. The emperor of Byzantium Alexios Komnenos will try to cut off their way to the union, as the united Normans approached Durrës laying siege to it.⁴³⁶

Historical sources claim that even Alexios Komnenos, upon realizing he had a risky job, played with the "Catholic card" by inviting the Venetians for help, after promising them settlements on the Albanian coast. However, this did not help to protect Durrës from the Norman occupation. After several tactical victories, Komnenos, in October of the following year, was defeated by the Normans and, together with George the Palaeologus, fled to Ohër. After this victory, Guiscard sent a message to the local population to join them, because "freedom they lacked was awaiting them".⁴³⁷

The Norman military chief promised to bring the Byzantine Orthodox principalities back under the control of the Vatican, warning of major upheavals that would remove the internal divisions that had reached the level of hostility, of which the Arabs and the Ottomans in general were already benefiting in the East, increasingly cutting off the arms of the Eastern Empire, and this was often done at the behest of the local Christian feudal lords in the East, who had been weary of inter-church war and internal disintegration of Byzantium.

With Durrës, in October of that year, falling into his hands, Guiscard had opened the way towards Constantinople. Norman armies penetrated deep into the imperial territory, traversing Epirus, Macedonia, and Thessaly, and eventually encircling Larissa. However, in the spring of 1082, Robert Guiscard was forced to return to Italy, where he had sparked a revolt instigated

⁴³⁴ Idem.

⁴³⁵ Neuman, C: "*Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor des Kreuzzügen*", Leipzig, 1894.

⁴³⁶ See: Erdan, C: "*Die Entstehung des Kreuzzsgedankens*", 1935.

⁴³⁷ See: Regel, W: "*Fontes serum byzantinarum*", I, 1892.

by supporters of the Byzantine emperor Alexios Komnenos, and passed command to his son, Boemund.⁴³⁸

Guiscard's departure to Italy created a liberating situation for Byzantium, providing it with an opportunity to prevent the infiltration of Norman forces in Epirus, Macedonia and the Adriatic, and to create conditions for concluding an agreement with Venice against the Normans, managing to retake Durrës from the Normans. Despite the alliance with Venice, the fate of the war certainly would not have smiled on Alexios Komnenos as it did, if Guiscard, after suppressing the revolt in Italy instigated by Byzantium and Venice, as soon as he returned to Vlora, in 1085, from whence he would quite successfully resume operations against the Byzantine armies, had not fallen victim to an epidemic.

Guiscard's death had a double effect: on the front with the Byzantines, but also on the return of the unrest in Italy, which briefly freed Byzantium of the Norman danger, eventually reoccurring though with the help of the Crusaders.⁴³⁹

Meanwhile, the alliance with Venice will cost Byzantium dearly. Venice demanded a high price for the help it gave to return Durrës to Byzantium. By a treaty of May 1082, the Doge of Venice took over for himself and his descendants the title of a *protosebaste*, with a fair annual royalty, while the patriarch of Grado was honored with the title of *hypertimos*, and the church of Venice with an annual contribution of twenty gold librae. Though, Venice will reap the greatest benefits from this deal in the field of trade, as from now on its traders would be allowed to trade freely in all parts of the Byzantine Empire, including Constantinople itself, without paying any customs duties. Thus, the Venetians were privileged over the local merchants. In this way Venice laid the foundations of its colonial power in the East and at the same time opened a deep rift in the trading system of the Byzantine state. The fact that Venice continued to recognize the sovereign rights of the Byzantine emperor did not change anything. The Italian Maritime Republic will be a determining factor in the history of Byzantium.⁴⁴⁰

At the time when Alexios Komnenos "purchased" the Norman temporary security from Venice at a high price, at the same time, he will face the Pechenegs, a eastern Turkmen people, very militant, mainly of the Bogumil faith, who for years have threatened Byzantium and had recently found the support of the Bogomils in the eastern part of the Illyricum Peninsula, to do so at a time when the Empire was facing the Norman threat in the Adriatic, where it had begun to break off the "guard". After fierce fighting with them, where the Byzantines proved incapable of thwarting them, the Pechenegs managed to get close to the walls of Constantinople. The danger will be exacerbated as they are joined by the troops of Emir of Smyrna Chaka Bey, one of Suleiman's heirs, who died in 1085, having allied with the Pechenegs to conquer the Byzantine castle.⁴⁴¹

But the cunning Komnenos also managed to withstand this threat by playing the card of the "enemy of my enemy", as he had done in Durrës when in war with the Normans he called on the Venetians for help, while against the Pechenegs he called on the Cumans for help, another nomad Turkish people by language but different by ethnic origin. They arrived quickly to the Byzantine territory, where the emperor promised them settlement and property on condition that they give up the looting they had been dealing with so far. In April 1091, at the foot of Mount Levunion, the Cumans fought the final battle against the Pechenegs, which not only won, but massacred the Pechenegs to the last. This massacre is described in very

⁴³⁸ Ostrogorski, Georg: "Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine", Tiranë, 2002, p. 255.

⁴³⁹ See: Gregorie, H: "La Chanson de Roland de l'on 1085", 1939.

⁴⁴⁰ Jireček, K: „Die Bedeutung von Ragusa in der HandelsGeschichte des Mittelalters“, 1899, p. 9.

⁴⁴¹ Ostrogorski, Georg: "Historia e Perandirisë Bizantine", Tiranë, 2002, p. 257.

shocking words by the daughter of the emperor, Anna Komnenos, as follows: “An entire people, numbered in the tens of thousands, perished in a single day.”⁴⁴²

In this way, killing two birds with a single stone, the Byzantine emperor managed to settle accounts with the Smyrna Chaka inciting his son-in-law, the Emir of Nicaea, Abul Qazim against him. While he will incite the latter against some other emirs to war against the Sultan of ar-Rumi, which disintegrated as a result of the civil wars among the emirs led by Byzantium, creating a good opportunity for Komnenos to re-conquer Asia Minor.⁴⁴³

Alexios Komnenos’ way of returning possessions in Asia Minor will be cut off from the West, where he thought that by the agreement with Venice he had managed to get rid of the Norman danger once and for all after they had left Durrës and in general from the other side of the Adriatic, where on the way to Constantinople, they had landed and for four years remained stuck in between Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace. It was the Crusaders who, after answered the call by Pope Urban II to the Council of Clermont to liberate the holy tomb, occupied from 1077 by the Seljuk Turks, who had conquered Jerusalem. The papacy had been strengthened at the time and saw in the idea of a crusade a good opportunity to extend power as far east as possible. The Pope’s call resonated among feudal lords eager for land and adventure, as well as the Western masses, plagued by economic hardship and religious enthusiasm. This call found support in the East as well, since the Holy Land had once been a Byzantine province, which was to be liberated, and this represented a state obligation and not an obligation of Christianity in general. The advantage of the state obligation over the Christian one had to do with the schism between the two churches, which made any cooperation with the West impossible.

Numerous ecclesiastical or diplomatic sources of the time indicate that it would have been Alexios Komnenos, who through his emissaries, and also directly, asked Pope Urban II that the Crusaders be led as soon as possible to “their sacred mission”,⁴⁴⁴ as it could mobilize his war against the East, with the Crusaders and their fanaticism to be exploited for these purposes. But, evidently, this account will cause trouble for Komnenos and the Empire itself, turning into a further wick for Byzantium and Christianity in general.

The Crusaders’ “vanguard”, the priest Hermit of Amiens, also showed that this would be the case. It is known that he was followed by a crowd of depraved fanatics, who, on the way, passing through Hungary and the Illyricum lands, went about after bounty. With that rush, on August 1 they reached Constantinople, where the looting continued, though the emperor, who had accounts to settle with them, ordered them to be escorted to the Bosphorus to Asia Minor, where they were badly defeated by the Turks, and only a small part of them managed to return to Constantinople.⁴⁴⁵

The defeat of the Crusaders’ vanguard, however, did not stop the plans for their organized start, as everyone was interested in them, regardless of what each side expected. So from the beginning of 1096, in the Byzantium capital descended the cream of Western cavalry, what it most expected from this enterprise. Among them were the Duke of Lorraine - Godfrey of Bouillon, Count Raymond of Toulouse, Hugo de Vermandua, brother of the King

⁴⁴² Gybon, M: “*Le nom de Βλαχην dans l’Alexioside d’Anne Comnene*”, 1951, p. 44 and Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisē Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 257.

⁴⁴³ See: Laurent, J: “*Byzance et les origines dr Soutanat Raum, Melanges Diehl*”, I, 1930.

⁴⁴⁴ For more see: Holzman, W: “*Studien zur Orientpolitik des Reformpapsttums und zur Entstehungen des ersten Kreuzzuges*” (Hist.Vierteljahrscht, 22 (1942), 167, and “*Die Unionsverhandlungen zwischen Keiser Alexios I und Papst Urban II. Im Jahr 1089*”, 1928, p. 38. The assessment that Emperor Alexios Komnenos had sought help from Pope Urban II is also confirmed by Byzantine sources, especially those coming from Synopsis Sathas (Theodore Skutarioti), who is also accepted by the renowned historian P. Lemerle “*Byzance es la Croisade, Relazione del X Congresso internazionale di scienze storiche*”, Rome, 1955, III, 600. According to this historian, the essence of the problem does not lie in learning the truth whether or not Alexios I asked for help from the West, because it is not disputed that he has made such a request, even several times. But the problem lies as to what was the purpose of his request for help: did he ask for troops to help his Empire or did he want to organize a Western crusade?

⁴⁴⁵ For more: Neumann, C: “*Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor den Kreuzzügen*”, Leipzig, 1894.

of France, Robert of Flanders. There is also Prince Norman Boemund, son of Robert Guiscard, who ten years before led the first Norman campaign in Epirus, Macedonia and Thessaly, and even temporarily managed to take Durrës, which he was forced to leave after being attacked by the Venetians.⁴⁴⁶

In these not-so-natural circumstances for Byzantium, where Constantinople had long since forgotten the presence of nobles and Western counts, the cunning of Alexios Komnenos, who needed the Crusaders and was still afraid of their power, came to the fore again. He would draft an agreement by which it was possible for the meat to be roasted and the skewer saved. So, out of all of this, an agreement was reached according to which Byzantium recognized their property rights, but on the condition that they be returned to the Empire and it then, by means of a decree, would recognize their property rights and their conduct in accordance with imperial laws. By means of this compromise, the emperor vowed to supply the Crusaders with food and military equipment. The emperor also vowed to seize the cross himself and put it at the forefront of the Crusaders with his entire army. Under these conditions, an agreement was signed with particular princes, signed also by Boemund, Guiscard's nephew, who, as will be seen, will soon break it, with the Raymond of Toulouse being the only one failing to sign.⁴⁴⁷

With the motto of this call, in the spring of 1097 the first crusade began. Guiscard's son, Boemund, after crossing once again the Arbërian lands with his armies while the population had not still recovered from the damage inflicted on them by the Normans, reappears with the attitude that *"the Arbërian lands had the honor that the crusaders gathered from all European countries, were setting off from there for Jerusalem to restore the holy tomb and the sacred Christian lands under the conquest of the Seljuk Turks."*⁴⁴⁸

In addition to the many Norman crusaders who again landed in Vlora and Himara and followed the road along the Vjosa and Devoll, they also came from two other directions. The Crusaders of Provence (Southern France), led by Count Raymond of Toulouse, through Dalmatia, entered the lands of Arbërians on the part of Shkodra. The French crusaders of Flanders and Normandy, passing through Italy, were thrown into Durrës by sea. Both of these groups crossed the country following the Egnatia royal route through the Shkumbin valley.⁴⁴⁹

The first important success of the crusade was the conquest of Nicaea in June 1097. On this occasion the Crusaders kept their word, as the city they took with blood was handed over to the emperor Alexios Komnenos, where an imperial garrison was quickly established. The Crusaders, with a few exceptions, such as Baldwin, brother of Gottfrey of Bouillon and Tancredi, Boemund's grandson, had made a detour to Ciliicia to take over the towns there, from where Baldwin would continue his march in northern Mesopotamia, where he established an autonomous principality centered in Edessa.⁴⁵⁰

Indeed, on the one hand, the Crusaders' disagreements with Alexios I will be highlighted here, and on the other hand, discontent among the Crusaders grew on how they should act in the new circumstances when they with the liberated the occupied territories had gone far beyond the agreement they had with Alexios I. The cause was the conquest of Antioch, the capital of Syria, where the Crusaders had entered on June 3, 1098. In this sizing on winning Antioch over, the most alert one was the Norman Boemund, who was thus fulfilling Guiscard's will he had left as soon as he landed in Vlora, in 1081, when he swore that in the East he would establish a Norman Rome.

⁴⁴⁶ Ostrogorski, Georg: *"Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine"*, Tiranë 2002, p. 258.

⁴⁴⁷ See: Guillard, R: *"Le grand domesticat a Byzance"*, 1938.

⁴⁴⁸ *"The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium"*, vol. I-III, New York – London, 1991, and Schreiner, P: *"Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken"*, I, Wien, 1975.

⁴⁴⁹ See: Scharanis, P: *"Byzantium, the West, and the Origin of the First Crusade"*, në BYZ. 19/1949.

⁴⁵⁰ Ostrogorski, Georg: *"Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine"*, Tiranë 2002, p. 253.

After three months, the Crusaders crossed the Bosphorus and plunged into Asia Minor, where some of them will be given up after numerous invasions where they will remain forever, while most of them moved closer to Jerusalem and for more than two years kept it under siege. At that time, Jerusalem was under the rule of Caliph Fatimah of Egypt and was making great efforts to resist the Crusaders. However, on July 14, 1099, Jerusalem fell to them. It is noted that on that occasion they committed horrific massacres against the Arab population, which was almost completely wiped out. This massacre will open a permanent blood gap between the Franks and the Turks and the Arabs, on the other side. On this occasion, the Crusaders proclaimed the "*Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*" under the direction of Duke Lorain, Godfrey de Bouillon, who received the title "*Protector of the Holy Sepulcher*" to rule Palestine as the Pope's successor. After Bouillon's death a year later, he was replaced by his brother, Baldwin, who paved the way for the century-old "*Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*", which included Palestine and several other parts of the East. In addition to the creation of the "*Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*", another success of the first crusade, at least in maintaining the influence of Westerners in this part of the world, the principality of Antioch appeared, whose ruler became the duke of the Normans, Boemund, who in the new circumstances, never gave up his ambitions for the conquest of Constantinople and the overthrow of Byzantium in accordance with what King Roger had once sought.⁴⁵¹

Under these circumstances, Emperor Alexios Komnenos could tolerate a "Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem" in Palestine under the leadership of Duke Bouillon, but not with Boemund's settling in Antioch, because the Norman principalities in Syria posed a direct threat to its interests in the most important part. The Norman principality in Syria was also looked down upon by the Turks, who already had an agreement with Alexios. Thus the Norman prince was simultaneously targeted by two strong opponents: the Byzantines and the Turks. After a nearly two-year war, he was captured by Emir Malik Ghazi of the Danishmendiya dynasty, but was released on bail by the Crusaders and returned to Antioch. But after a heavy defeat in 1104, that the Latins suffered from the Turks near Harran, he left Tarquand in Antioch and returned to the West to prepare a large-scale campaign against Byzantium.

The Normans, led by Count Boemund, who had an army of 250,000 men, and with the blessings of Pope Gregory, in the spring of 1107, would wage war against Byzantium by conquering the Adriatic coast in Illyricum. Boemund left Apulia landing in Vlora from where the Byzantine fleet was unable to stop his invasion. Then the Normans turned to Durrës, which they surrounded and took thanks to the local population which joined them. The same was done in the case of the attacks and capture of Kruja and Dibra, as the Byzantine army led by Commander Cantacuzene suffered heavy defeats, which were repeated in the capture of Kanina and fortresses along the Erzen River valley.

The Normans were not destined for the coastal and central Illyricum (Epirus, Dardania, and Macedonia) to destroy the Byzantine fortress and promote the Roman Empire there. It was not the Byzantine military power that, in the war with the Normans had lost most of its military strongholds in Illyricum, that prevented the Normans from achieving historical goals, but it was cholera, which that winter hit the Norman camps. The cholera halved and devastated the Normans so much that Count Boemund, as prince of Antioch, had no choice but to accept the vassalage of the Byzantine emperor without a fight. He returned to Italy with the soldiers who had survived the cholera, and as soon as he got there he declared that he would return to Illyricum to destroy Byzantium. This will not happen because he died in the summer of 1111.

Although the Crusades will continue occasionally, from now on, they will bypass Arbërian lands in Illyricum, they will not be able to raise hopes for the return of what was

⁴⁵¹ Neumann, C: "*Die Weltstellung des byzantinischen Reiches vor den Kreuzzügen*", Lipsia 1894.

called the domination of the Western Empire with Rome as leader in all the areas the Christian lands stretched, which, as will be seen, will have more trouble with themselves than with the Ottoman threat that was narrowing, and after a while the eastern part will turn into misfortune. The Normans, who initially presented themselves as their driving force and perhaps would succeed in restoring the former Catholic kingdoms and principalities to their former glory, are destined to fail, out of hesitation and out of fear of the West, of this achievement! Numerous sources point out that even the Vatican itself, the main inspirer of the Crusades and the Norman supporter of the conquests to the East, the moment he saw that the Normans, however, were close to a historic turn, began intrigues known to sabotage their success. As usual, they started with its main supporters: Venice and Genoa, who will be involved in various games, which will become a headache and defeat for the Normans even without being aware that they were coming from their main blessing Papacy.⁴⁵²

Surely, this Vatican backstage had to do with the reckoning that, despite the well-known controversies and disagreements with Constantinople, it had to be protected from eventual collapse.

This strategy will be best seen even from the position of the Pope, Boniface VIII, when all despair, during the Fourth Crusade, with a rebuke, would be directed to the Marquess of Montferrato about what had happened in the Byzantine capital after crusaders entered: *“You distorted the sacred purpose for which you had set out, fighting the Christians instead of the Saracens, occupying Constantinople instead of Jerusalem, preferring the material prosperity of this world to the divine happiness in the next world.”*⁴⁵³

Some of the papal strategists were of the opinion that Byzantium should be supported to withstand the Ottoman invasions and the growing threats posed to Christianity from both East and West, so there was no interest in destroying the natural defensive dam against them. But, as will be seen, after the weakening of the Normans, it will be the Venetians who will do their best to seize power from the Byzantines from within, so that it becomes a puppet of the Adriatic trade republic for its known role in this regard.

The strategy of weakening the Byzantine power, even by directly bringing it down, began with the Second Crusade, when after the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the Saracens, in October 1187, led by Prince Salahuddin, the Pope Clement III call for a general crusade, which would include the German emperor Friedrich Barbarossa, the Venetians would inspire him to cross the road to Palestine through Constantinople and there, before settling accounts with the Saracens, establish “order”, although the Papacy will be against this. .. The tragic loss of Barbarossa on his way to Asia, and the capture of the Crusade by Henry IV, saved the Byzantine capital for a short time from Catholic punishment, but not forever, because after the failure of the Second and Third Crusades, it will be Pope Innocent III, who predicted that the Fourth Crusade would be across the sea, that is, that the Crusaders would land in Egypt, and from there head to Palestine, considered as the easiest route. The Pope, who after the dissolution of the Western Empire had remained the only authority in this part, which mediated between the Latin remnants and the German power of Henry who claimed the throne of Byzantium, would put Eastern politics first, where according to him Byzantium was not to be overthrown by force of arms, but was to submit to the St. Peter’s Seat through the unification of the churches taking part in the crusades together with Western Christianity.

The reasons why the Pope was already playing with the card of preserving Byzantium were also of a purely ecclesiastical nature, as he had managed to bring closer in the former part of Illyricum the Rascian principalities and the returning Bulgarian kingdom, which after

⁴⁵² See Ostrogorski, Georgie: *“Istoria Vizantije”*, Beograd, 1969. The author brings ample evidence of secret agreements between the Vatican and Constantinople to prevent the Normans from achieving their intended military successes around the return of Jerusalem.

⁴⁵³ Zavalani, Tajar: *“Historia e Shqipnis”*, 1998, p. 106.

the weakening of The Byzantines had begun to turn their eyes to the Holy See and seek its spiritual care, which meant nothing but a return to the West. Thus, Nemanja's door, which was stretched from Ducelea to Rascia, after being conquered by Byzantium and there the son-in-law of the Byzantine emperor, Stefan, bearing the title of a *sebastocrat*, will remove his father Nemanja, who will become a monk secluding himself in Mount Athos Monastery, instead of connecting with Byzantium, will turn his back to his father-in-law to align with Rome.⁴⁵⁴

Why Stefan will not succeed in his first attempt, his brother, Vukan, who had remained in Dioclea (Zeta), was to blame. Brothers Stefan and Vukan, one lord of Rascia and the other of Dioclea (Zeta) will enter a power struggle with each other with each trying to take advantage of Hungary and the papacy as allies. In this bloody war Vukan was assisted by Hungary and after recognizing the power of the Pope and Hungarian sovereignty in 1202, he ascended to power, which he would soon lose as his brother Stefan restored it with the help of the Bulgarians.⁴⁵⁵

But that did not mean that he had renounced Rome and its tutelage in which the Rascians had entered. On the contrary, it was the Bulgarians themselves who accepted the Roman Church as the "guarantor" of this diversion between the brothers. The Holy See added the Rascian part to the Illyrian cake with the Bulgarians. Thus Rome, on the eve of the fall of Constantinople, had placed not only tribal races but also Bulgarians under its spiritual hegemony, expanding its sphere of influence over most of Illyricum. This was a situation almost similar to that established six centuries ago by Emperor Justinian I when in Justiniana Prima of Dardania, part of the great province of Illyricum, he placed under the jurisdiction of the Holy See, remaining there until the 8th Congress of Constantinople in 870, when the conquered lands of Illyricum by Bulgaria came under the full supervision of the eastern church, thus ending the administrative and spiritual subjectivity of Illyricum within the Empire.

However, it must be said that the situation established by the Holy See in favor of the West, with the Rascians and Hungarians were already included under its crown, was to the detriment of the Arbërian lands, since during that time a good part of Dardania and Macedonia is occupied by the tribal Zhupan Nemanja, by which Rascia, for the first time, extended its conquests in these parts. This action will be preceded by the strengthening of Bulgaria, expanding in the territories of Byzantium, with which Zhupan Nemanja had made an alliance with Peter of Bulgaria to jointly divide the Illyricum parts of Byzantium.⁴⁵⁶

Thus, he conquered Nish and destroyed the Timot Valley, where he inflicted great damage.⁴⁵⁷

On this occasion, Nemanja completely destroyed the ancient city, among the main ones in Dardania during the time of Justinian. In order to secure these conquests, Nemanja, who was aware that the next crusade on Jerusalem would be launched by the Germans, and they, along with the Hungarians, emerged as its main supporters, hastened to send his representatives to the imperial court on Christmas 1188 in Nuremberg, where King Friedrich was handed a letter stating that "the Rascians were very happy to see the Crusaders marching through the country and wishing nothing more than to personally greet the emperor."⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ For more see: Miklsosich, F: "*Monumenta Serbica spetactantia historiam Serbiae, Bosnae, Rsgusii*", Wien 1858; Jiriček, C: "*Staat und Gesellschaft in mittelalterlichen Serbien*", III, Denkschriften, Wiener Akademi, 1914; "*Zbornik Ilariona Ruvaraca*", Beograd, 1934; Stojanović. I "*Istorija srspkog naroda*", Beograd 1926; Ђирковић, Ц: "*Српску летопису и византијске кратке хронике*", Деспотовац, 1998; "*Istorija naroda Jugoslavie*", Beograd, 1953.

⁴⁵⁵ See Gelcich, Guisepppe: "*Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*", Tiranë 2009, p. 18.

⁴⁵⁶ Jiriček, Konstatin: "*Historia e serbëve*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 305.

⁴⁵⁷ Idem.

⁴⁵⁸ Idem, p. 306.

In the spring of 1189 the great crusading army led by Friedrich of Hungary crossed the Danube and reached the Morava valley. On July 27, Nemanja and his brother Strazimir appeared before the great emperor, bringing him many gifts and thanking him for crossing through their lands so they could reap many benefits (the conquest of Nish and the surrounding areas, where they appear for the first time) seeking to become vassals of the Germans, informing them that they were ready to support them by all means against the Greeks.⁴⁵⁹

Emperor Friedrich, with his mind focused on Jerusalem, however, did not prevent his allies (the Rascians and Bulgarians) from using his penetration to the East for their own purposes, such as forcing them to make the most of the South, in Central Illyricum, in Dardania and Macedonia.

In fact, that's what happens. A large part of Stefan Nemanja's army continued with the Crusaders led by Friedrich in the direction of Adrianople, but at the same time, Nemanja led a good number of his troops to the Morava and Ibar valleys to conquer Scupi and Prizren as well as the Upper and Lower Polog provinces. Thus, in January 1190, Nemanja's army destroyed the Byzantine castles of Serdica as far as Prizren, where they also occupied Scupi and the provinces of Polog. On this occasion, he appointed the Arbërian prince, Progon a vassal, to whom he vowed his daughter Komita to marriage.⁴⁶⁰

This will be the first appearance of the tribal Rascia in Central Illyricum (the area of Dardania and ancient Macedonia), which until then were part of Byzantium ruled by nobles, despots and local princes. This fact is of great importance because it removes the fog created by some ecclesiastical documents invented and rewritten in the 19th century, according to which the social and political Rascian presence in these parts, although known as tribal, dates from the 7th century AD and hence, even with the attribute of the "Serbian medieval state", which is usually attributed to the name "Rascia", "Regni Rascia", used in most Byzantine chronicles!

Although following an agreement of the German Emperor Friedrich with Byzantium in Adrianople (February 14, 1190), that the Crusaders would be heading to Asia through Hellespont, with which the Rascians and Bulgarians could no longer count on German aid to continue their conquests to the central parts of Byzantium, many of which had already been conquered, the Zhupan of Rascia, Stefan Nemanja, succeeded even after losing to the Byzantine emperor Isaac at the Battle of Morava, to sign a favorable peace treaty with Byzantium. With it, Nemanja justifies the conquests of the Dardanian lands, where their civilization stretched from antiquity onwards, prospering especially during the time of Justinian I, when it had become an administrative and spiritual center, among the most famous of Illyricum.

Thus, it can be said that after these invasions aided by the Catholic crusaders, the Rascians held a significant part of the area of what appeared as "*Arbërian Byzantium*" from Nish, Leskovac and the area of the river Sitnica and Llab with Lipjan. On the White Drin basin they kept the occupied provinces belonging to the Bishopric of Prizren, and those of Peja and Deçan, as well as the provinces in the north to Shkodra. Nemanja was also reinforced on the coast with new invasions in the Dioclea part, including Tivar and Kotor.⁴⁶¹

The reasons why Byzantium sought to strengthen Zhupan Stefan Nemanja with new commitments from the central part to the Adriatic (mainly with parts belonging to the Arber countries) should be sought in determining that Rascia, accepting the vassalage of Constantinople, should appear as the main supporter. between the Bulgarians and the West, where the Byzantine edifice would be preserved, already shaken from both within and

⁴⁵⁹ Idem, p. 307.

⁴⁶⁰ Idem, p. 328.

⁴⁶¹ Idem, p. 310.

without, and especially by the constant agreements made by the Catholic countries of the West to use them in the war against Constantinople. For this reason, a marriage was established with Nemanja. His son Stefan married the Emperor's granddaughter Eudocia, his brother Alexios' daughter.⁴⁶²

In addition to the great gains in the central and western parts, the Rascian Zhupan proved to be skilled in strengthening the section between Dioclea and Zahlumia, from where, in fact, came the core of his social and political organization of his kinship from the ninth century AD from where then he had moved eastward to Rascia, though for the "center: to have two wings, he needed an outlet to the Adriatic. Since Stefan Nemanja had joined the crusade of Friedrich I declaring his support for the campaign in Jerusalem and even accepting German vassalage - he would soon change his words entering into secret agreements with the Normans. - Pope Clement III (November 25, 1189) asking the Catholic archbishops of Ragusa and Tivar to enter into friendly relations with Nemanja. The Pope had even asked the newly appointed archbishop, Bernard of Ragusa, for Ragusa to honor the sons of Nemanja (*dilectis filiis, nobilibus viris megajupano, Straschimiro et Miroslabo*),⁴⁶³ an honor, which, as his father had done, had returned with allegiance to the Catholic Church.

In all this development restoring to the Holy See to some extent its space of influence in the parts of the former Illyricum, especially in the part of Dardania and Macedonia, where the Rascians were already trying to remain as subject to Catholicism as possible, the Western Church was also not interested in destroying the ecclesiastical balance after its partition in 1054. It feared that this might weaken Byzantium, which was not in its interest, although as will be seen, it would be precisely the Rascians, "the chosen" of the Papacy, who will try to turn into a key factor of this "balance" with the games of passing "from one side to the other".

There was another factor in all this elaboration demanding complete demolition of this balance in favor of Catholicism, that is, complete demolition of Byzantium and the creation of a new Rome there. Enrico Dandolo, an old Doge of Venice, in charge of the preparations for the crusade, was convinced that Byzantium should be ruined to the ground. Although this seemed a bit exaggerated, Venice had long been an ally of Byzantium, and thanks to an agreement with Emperor Alexios Komnenos in 1081, it had conquered all the markets of the Empire thanks to the privileges it enjoyed, yet after death of Alexios I and the coming to power of his heirs, especially Manuel, Venice saw its own interests in Byzantium threatened. It was his rivals Genoa and Pisa, already strengthened and with a new agreement with Manuel that could take Venice out of the game. Therefore, it was predictable that it was time for the entire atmosphere and also the anger of the Normans to be used to this purpose.⁴⁶⁴

On account of Louis VII, Venice took over the leadership of the crusade. The Crusaders rallied in Venice, and with the city's fleet being the only one that could carry thousands of Christian volunteers to Egypt with its own fleet, a preliminary agreement was needed with the Doge Enrico Dandolo, who asked the Crusaders to cover the costs of the trip to Venice by a military intervention to take Zara, which was held by the Hungarians. So it happened. In November 1202 Zara was conquered. The Crusaders in Zara will wait until the spring of next year. Isaac II's son will also join them. The young Alexios had escaped from prison with his blind father, where he had been thrown by Alexios Angelos long ago. In May 1203, an agreement was signed in Corfu to divert the expedition.⁴⁶⁵

Of course, the diversion of the expedition to Corfu was part of the Venetian games, persuading the Crusaders to land in Constantinople and settle accounts with the Byzantine-led

⁴⁶² See: Novaković, R: "Kad se rodio i kad je počeo da vlada St. Nemanja", in "Glasnik", 1958, 3-4.

⁴⁶³ See: Theiner: Mon. Slav. 1,6, (no date, a reply to Pope's letter of 2nd January 1199), cited according to Jiriček, K: "Historia e serbëve", Tiranë 2010, p. 311 and Ruvarac, Ilarion: "Raški episkopi i mitropoliti", Beograd, 1934, pp. 12-16.

⁴⁶⁴ See: Neumann, C: "Griechische Geschichtsschreiber und Geschichtsquellen", Lipsia, 1888.

⁴⁶⁵ Ostrogorski, Georg: "Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine", Tiranë, 2002, p. 288.

“conspirators”, led by Emperor Alexios III, who collaborated with the Arabs and other enemies of the Catholics, which actually happened.

The Crusaders did not find it difficult to enter the Golden Horn, after breaking the chains that prevented them from entering the bay. From there the Crusaders began to tear down the city walls from the ground. Attempts to defend the Byzantine capital were in vain. On July 17, 1203, Constantinople fell to the Crusaders. Emperor Alexios III fled with the treasury, while the Crusaders returned the blind Isaac II to the imperial throne, while his son Alexios IV was appointed co-emperor.

The blind emperor was unable to hold to the throne for long. Both the Crusaders, being unable to pay the reward agreed upon in Zara after he had restored to the throne, and the Byzantines, who could not to endure an emperor who was overseen by the Latins and was on his way to turning the Empire into their hostage, were dissatisfied with him. This led to an uprising in Constantinople in early January 1204, resulting in the overthrow of the Emperor, who lost his crown and life. The throne was taken over by Alexios V, Duke Murzulf, son-in-law of Alexios III and husband of Eudocia, former wife of despot Stefan, which restored in Byzantium once again the anti-Latin tendency, providing the Crusaders with the power to inflict wrath on the Byzantine capital.

Thus, in the summer of 1204, instead of Jerusalem, the Crusaders invaded the Byzantine capital. During that campaign, Constantinople fell prey to an unprecedented destruction by the Crusaders, where the works of art destroyed and other valuables plundered. The leadership will be entrusted to Alexios IV, a blind old man, released from prison and sat on an unstable throne, which he will soon lose, as the Crusaders will tear apart the Byzantine Empire, which they christened “*Latin Empire of Constantinople*” with Emperor Count Baldwin of Flanders.⁴⁶⁶

With this intervention, the preconditions for the collapse of Byzantium were set, which before it happened as a whole, paved the way for some debilitating developments throughout its expanse with various ambitions of the numerous principalities to inherit it or benefit from its fall will emerge, igniting numerous civil wars, which would seemingly suit the Arabs and the Turks, who after a century and a half, sent Byzantium and its ten-century rule to the showcases of history.

The time of over a century, becoming increasingly short for the defenders, users and internal and external destroyers of Byzantium, to put an end to the building whose roof had been dripping for a long time, passed through various disputes with conflicts, wars and also many unstable alliances, where even the countries of Arber and Arbërians will be included almost necessarily in all developments. These are important, because as related to them appear those representing the foundations of the state of Arber in the Middle Ages as a natural continuation of the building of the Byzantine Empire in the establishment of which they had participated from the beginning laying its foundations together with the Latins and the Greeks.

Of this nature are the “*Despotate of Epirus*” 1204-1253 and the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” 1272-1286. One founded by Michael Angelos II.⁴⁶⁷ The other was founded by King Charles I of Anjou.⁴⁶⁸

“*The Despotate of Epirus*” “appeared in the context of efforts to use the Byzantine heritage to create a competitive state structure with others, and here we must see the recent

⁴⁶⁶ For more see: Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë 2002, pp. 301-303; “*Hitoria e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 224-234; Jaques, Edwin: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, pp. 181-186; Zachariadou, e. A: “*Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania 1300-1418*”, Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunde des Morgenlandes 78, 1988; Faverial, Zhan Klod: “*Historia e Shqipërisë*”, Tiranë, 2004, p. 179; Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 19-27; Zavalani, T: “*Histori e Shqipnis*”, Tiranë.

⁴⁶⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*” I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 231-234.

⁴⁶⁸ Idem.

efforts of authentic Byzantine building factors such as the Illyrians along with the Romans and Greeks for preserving it despite the less likely probability that this would be done against the Ottoman threat from the east and continued efforts of Catholic countries from the West.⁴⁶⁹ With the emerging “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, appearing from the outside and within the framework of state structures that the Westerners had begun to create out of their royal crowns in order to create conditions for Byzantium to disintegrate, from within, to restore it into a western empire.

The latter, “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, although with certain “repetitions” and shocking returns for almost a century, in some stages with only the external “crown” remaining, however, for the first time it promotes politically the existence of “*Regnum Albaniae*”, and in a significant relation of the fierce battle of the West against the East, the Arbërians appear with kingship.

“DESPOTATE OF EPIRUS” AND “KINGDOM OF ARBËRIA”

It has rightly been said that history has seldom progressed as planned in the case of the division of the Byzantine Empire after what occurred during the Fourth Crusade. In fact it was all part of an account between the Crusaders and the great Venetian doge, Enrico Dandolo, who had played a decisive role in recent events and years also by being an inspirer of the treaty of partition and a central character on the implementation of the agreement.⁴⁷⁰

The first step in implementing the Byzantine Empire’s partition agreement was naturally to begin with the appointment of an emperor in Constantinople, an act that would take place under the influence of the Venetians, opting for the appointment of Count Baldwin of Flanders, who on 16th of May in St. Sophia Church is crowned Emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople. He was blessed by the first Latin patriarch of Constantinople, the Venetian Tomazo Morazini. On this occasion, as Emperor of the Latin Empire, Baldwin took a quarter of the entire territory of the Empire, while of the remaining three quarters, half belonged to the Venetians and the rest to the imperial feudal lords who distributed it to the knights. .. But However, the greatest benefits, as expected, went to Venice. Although it relinquished the territories of Epirus, Acarnania, Aetolia, and the Peloponnese, it took the ports of Corona and Modon in the Peloponnese, and a little later that of Durres and Ragusa in the Adriatic. The Adriatic Republic also took the Ionian Islands, Crete, most of the archipelago’s islands, including Euboea, Androa and Naxos, the most important gates of Hellespont and the Sea of Marmara: Gallipoli, Rodos and Heracles, as well as Adrianople inland of the land of the Empire. Venice also received three-thirds of the city of Constantinople turning into the lord of the quarter of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, the Byzantine Empire was divided into a number of large and small principalities, with a complex and diverse system of feuds.

The establishment of the “*Despotate of Epirus*” is related to the Fourth Crusade and its consequences for Byzantium. After the Latins conquered Constantinople proclaiming the “*Latin Empire of Constantinople*”, Emperor Alexios V fled and with the treasure he took with him, he settled in Nicea in Asia Minor, which he declared as the capital. Since Alexios V had lost his authority, it was necessary for the soldier Theodore Laskaris, Komnenos’ son-in-law, to emerge on the scene, forming an “*Empire in Exile*”. It included mainly the European

⁴⁶⁹ See: Nicol, Donala M: “*The Despotat of Epiros*”, Oxford,1957.

⁴⁷⁰ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 302.

provinces of Byzantium that had not been conquered by the Latins, or which enjoyed some autonomy within certain feuds. This composition also includes certain feuds from the Drin to the Gulf of Corinth, known as Epirus. Michael Angelos I, who was in Thessaloniki, was proclaimed Despot of Epirus, opposing the emperor of Nicaea. Michael left Thessaloniki for Durrës, and there, with the help of Arbëresh and Vlach soldiers, he fortified the city and managed to keep the Despotate of Epirus strong for ten years. Before he died, he appointed Theodore Angelos, his half brother from his mother's side, as his heir, who did his best to turn the "Despotate of Epirus" into an Orthodox fortress of Byzantine in battle against the Westerners, who were in Constantinople with their "*Latin Empire in Constantinople*". and with the part of the "Latin Empire" in Thessaloniki. On the occasion of his brother taking the throne, Theodore combined the names of three imperial dynasties: the Angelos, the Doukas and the Komnenos,⁴⁷¹ thus being named Theodore Angelos Doukas Komnenos, which, as will be seen, will arouse rivalry between the two Byzantine centers, fighting to restore the Byzantine throne to Constantinople.

Under the direction of Theodore Angelos, the "Despotate of Epirus" was taking the form of an autonomous state of increasing importance. The warrior nobleman had already captured the areas from Durrës to the bay of Corinth with the center in Arta. Thus, the Epirote state, as a Byzantine principality at the center of Illyricum, like the "Nicaean Empire" in Asia Minor, represented an important center of Byzantine cultural continuity and a nucleus of political unification, uniting the three former ethnicities of antiquity: Epirote, Dardanian and Macedonian.⁴⁷²

On these principles, as an independent principality, stood against the "Latin Kingdom" of Thessaloniki, the Venetians in the Adriatic, and against the Slavs in the North and Northeast. In 1216 Theodore achieved great success after cutting off a Latin limb that held Byzantium hostage, such as the "*Latin Kingdom of Thessaloniki*". Prior to this, Theodore captured the Latin emperor of Thessaloniki, Peter de Courtenay, who had previously stayed in Rome, where he was crowned by Pope Honorius III of the Latin Empire. Peter of Courtenay, the husband of Yolanda, sister of Baldwin and Henry, had to go through Durrës on her way to Constantinople to witness the triumph of the coronation in Rome. After this great success, Theodore Angelos Doukas Komnenos undertook an extensive campaign against the Latins. Of course, his first target was the neighboring kingdom of Thessaloniki, which was unlikely to withstand them, as the knights who had founded it had returned to their lands. The Epirote prince kept the "*Latin Kingdom of Thessaloniki*" under siege for some time, until the end of 1224, when he invaded it. This was also the end of one of the crusading states created on Byzantine soil. The "*Despotate of Epirus*" already stretched from the Adriatic to the Aegean and included Thessaly and a large part of Macedonia.

These successes made Theodore Angelos Doukas Komnenos see himself an emperor. He was called the *Basileus* and *autocrator* of the Romans, holding himself a heir to the Byzantine throne and leader of the battle for Constantinople, openly opposing the Empire of Nicaea.⁴⁷³

The success of Theodore Angelos Doukas Komnenos against the Latins, in which Arbëresh soldiers and feudal lords from parts of Epirus also took part, greatly frightened the West, which would do their best to save the "*Latin Empire of Constantinople*" from Theodore Angelos and his Epirus power. But what Rome was not able to do, so that Theodore Angelos

⁴⁷¹ Mihail and Teodor were the sons of *sebastocrator* Johan Angelos. The first illegitimate and the second legitimate. The name Dukas was taken from his mother, that of Komnenos by his grandmother Theodora, daughter of Alexios I. (See: Nicol, D: "*The Despotat of Epiros*", Oxford, 1957 and Zachariadou, e. A: "*Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania 1300-1418*", Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunde des Morgenlandes 78, 1988).

⁴⁷² Nicol, D: "*The Despotat of Epiros*", Oxford, 1957, faqe 309.

⁴⁷³ See: Langon, J: "*La reprise de Salonique par les Grecs en 1224, Actes du VI Congres Intern. d'Etudes Byz.*", I (1950) and Prinzing, Gunter: "*Studien zur Provinz un Zentralverwaltung im Machtbereich dre Epirotischen Herrscher Michael I und Theodoros Dukas*", 1982.

Doukas Komnenos would not end up in Constantinople as emperor of Byzantium, was made by his “rival”, the tsar of Bulgaria Ivan Asen II, who before they approached the target, tricked Theodore Angelos in Edirne cutting him off with a large army. There Theodore Angelos Doukas Komnenos suffered a big defeat at the hands of the Bulgarians, where he was taken prisoner and blinded.

With this defeat by the Bulgarians, the “*Byzantine Empire of Thessaloniki*” was destroyed, while the “*Despotate of Epirus*” returned to its former borders and continued as a separate kingdom for several more years,⁴⁷⁴ until the Bulgarian Ivan Asen II returned the former dream of King, Boris, and, after conquering Macedonia brought also the lands of Illyricum to Durrës under submission.⁴⁷⁵

During this campaign, the Bulgarians regained strength in central and southern Illyricum, either by tying themselves to the despots of Rascia or by maintaining good relations with the heirs of German King Henry, who held the Latins and Normans as common opponents. On these alliances and determined to eliminate at all costs Nicaea’s rivalry for the Byzantine throne, the Bulgarians demanded their be released of the Roman Church crown. Though refusing to submit to the Eastern Church, that is, Constantinople, whose “authorizations” were already in Nicaea, Asen II came up with the idea of establishing an *Orthodox Patriarchate* in Ternovo that would be recognized by Nicaea and by the eastern patriarchs. Nicaea’s ecclesiastical leaders angrily acknowledged this, fearing that the rejection would push Bulgaria into the bosom of Rome with major political consequences that the deported empire, which was waiting to return, regretted. Thus, with the establishment of the *Bulgarian Patriarchate*, Bulgaria gained ecclesiastical independence, as did the church of Rascia, which used almost the same tricks as the Bulgarians. These churches, however, had to recognize the primacy of the patriarch of Nicaea, mention the name of the Byzantine patriarch in religious services, and pay tribute to him.

The Treaty of Tolerance between the three Byzantine churches was signed in the spring of 1235 in Gallipoli, where the new post of the Bulgarian church was announced. The “reconciliation” was solemnly followed by the marriage of the Emperor’s son Theodore II Laskaris to the daughter of the king of Bulgaria.

Despite this “marriage”, the Bulgarian Kingdom of Ivan Asen II did not last long. Built on extremely large backstage, made on all three sides, it collapsed in 1241, after the death of Ivan Asen II, at a time when it was close to establishing an alliance with the Latins and Cumans against Nicaea. This gave Ivan Vatac good reason to return the Byzantine lands of Thrace and Macedonia to conquer Thessaloniki in 1246.

The “*Despotate of Epirus*”, with a lower intensity, is still involved in the internal delineation of the Byzantine emperors for power after Michael Palaeologos came to the helm of Byzantium in 1259. Palaeologos will declare himself Emperor but will be opposed by Despot of Epirus, Manuel II, who exploited the chaos of the Nicaea Empire to render the “*Despotate of Epirus*” independent of the Palaeologos influence. So he summoned the King of Sicily, Manfred, an uncrowned son of the German emperor Frederick II, for help. He also called for help the Prince of Morea, Guillaume II de Villehardouin. At the same time, Michael Palaeologos gathered a mercenary army composing of Turks, Tartars, Slavs, and Greeks and marched against Manuel II. The battle took place in the Pelagonia plain near Kostur. Manuel and his allies suffered a heavy defeat. Thus, the “*Despotate of Epirus*” ended, becoming a province of the Byzantine Empire.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ Idem, p. 109.

⁴⁷⁵ Vasilev, A: “*History of the Byzantine Empire*”, p. 525.

⁴⁷⁶ Idem, p. 527.

Shortly after, the “*Latin Empire of Constantinople*” was destroyed. On August 13, 1261, exactly 130 years later, Michael VIII the Palaeologus entered the historic capital of his kingdom with a grand ceremony and was solemnly crowned in the Cathedral of St. Sophia.⁴⁷⁷

This way, Byzantium united many of the territories separated from 1204 and began the well-known restoration projects, which never succeeded.

The fall of the “*Latin Empire of Constantinople*” did not seem to stop the final fall of Byzantium. The disruptive processes continued, though in the final stage they did not go in the direction of the return of the Byzantine center by the Latins. The vassal princes of the Byzantine emperors played a special and decisive role in its disintegration from within, primarily those of Rascia, Bulgaria and Greece. In this development, in various ways, they were used by the Catholic countries of the West, led by the Vatican. Evidently, here the Arbëresh factor, which had begun to appear in the political scene of Illyricum, as in the case of the “*Despotate of Epirus*”, also called the “*Arbërian Despotate*”,⁴⁷⁸ although scattered throughout the various principalities, gained special and even insurmountable weight. This led Western Catholic countries, led by the Vatican, to focus on them and their power for their own interests.

In fact, the Illyrian factor in this important part emerging ethnically and politically as *Arbërian*, found in a development of events among the harshest in terms of the twists and turns that will include the Byzantine Empire between the 11th-14th centuries, especially from the time when Crusades were launched, and the emergence of the Normans as a driving force in the West (from the First Crusade 1097 to the Fourth 1204), will be lined up on the side of the defenders of Byzantium and its edifice, being among its legitimate founders. It did so even when from the time of Emperor Heracles onwards, as the extremely important status of the interconnecting factor between West and East will be called into question (as the eastern province of the Empire – under the reforms of Emperor Diocletian and under his jurisdiction), ecclesiastical of the Holy See of Rome - with Emperor Justinian’s I Novellae). This status, although lost in the ninth century after the emergence of the Bulgarian kingdom and their fall under their long occupation, nevertheless, the Byzantine roof, no matter how much it would protect them from the “foul weather”, remained the only support. This will be seen along the developments following the First Crusade, although they’ll be the first to be affected, they will line up in defense of Byzantium, as it happened with the establishment of the “*Despotate of Epirus*”. They will do so even when the Slavs, who had greatly narrowed their ethnic space in the North and East, will become the main and destructive opponents of their ethnic and spiritual identity. Even after the Fourth Crusade, when Constantinople fell to the Latin Crusaders and came to its fragmentation into four parts (two on the West side: the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Latin Kingdom of Thessaloniki; and the Empire of Nicaea and the Despotate of Epirus on the side of Byzantium), Arbërians will be almost the only ones, for nearly half a century, to return the being defenders of Byzantium. The Angelos and Komnenos acted to keep alive the Byzantine trunk and soul in the western part, that is, in Epirus, Macedonia and Thessaly, up to the Bosphorus, where it would be most threatened by the Westerners. And, of course, Theodore Angelos Doukas Komnenos would have succeeded from Thessaloniki in taking Constantinople held by the Latins, which was on the verge of collapse, had it not been for the rivalry of Ivan Vatac of Nicaea, in the detached part of Asia Minor, that the Byzantine crown he wanted for himself, and also, if it were not for the Bulgarian Ivan II Asen, who in alliance with the despot of Rascia and the Latins, in 1230, cut off his way to Thrace, after he had conquered Adrianople and approaching the Bosphorus.

From then on, the “*Despotate of Epirus*”, although turned into a vassal of the emperor of Nicaea, would understand the new realities, which spoke of the end of Byzantium and the idea

⁴⁷⁷ Zavalani, Tajar: “*Histori e Shqipnisë*”, Tiranë, p. 110.

⁴⁷⁸ Vasilev, A: “*History of the Byzantine Empire*”, p. 525 and Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009.

of a great empire. It was doomed to fall once and for all, so, in line with this development the new factors had to be lined up and acting upon.

And “new” force factors, along with the Turks who had begun to penetrate from all sides, especially from the East and with their both overt and covert alliances, were creating favorable conditions for themselves, were already the Western countries, which had entered the game relying mostly on the local factor (despots and princes of Bulgaria, Slavs, Greeks and Arbërs). As it was clear that Byzantium could not turn into Rome, as attempted by the “*Latin Empire of Constantinople*” (a violent creature of Catholic fanatics who had compromised Catholicism), then the Holy See and its allies would focus on local factors, opponents of Byzantium and all those who had ambitions for power, to create *Western states or kingdoms* in this space, which would protect their interests in this part, primarily by turning them in a defensive dam against the Ottomans.

The fruit of this project was the emergence of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, founded in 1272 by Charles I of Anjou, who previously won the crown of the Kingdom of Sicily in the war with the King of Sicily, Manfred Hohenstaufen, after a request by the brother of the King of France to Pope Innocent IV, who with the overthrow of the Hohenstaufen from the throne intended to create opportunities for the Anjou to fight against the Byzantine Empire recovered on its territory and with its constituent factors. Arbëria was one of the most suitable places for this purpose, from where it would go further east.

Before the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” was established, which represents an important turning point, not only for Arbërians, one should see for further developments in Europe on the eve of the Ottoman invasions, which will change the direction of history, developments that will lead to the rise of the Arbërian factor to the level of an important Western ally in a battle to take advantage gaining as much as possible from the weakening of Byzantium. The Byzantine’s breath for the West meant not only the end of an adversary, but also the beginning of a concern about who would be able to inherit it, especially when it was known that the main contenders - the Rascians - were more unpredictable in their tendencies for possible alliances with the Ottomans, which were also related to an undeclared position of the Patriarchate of Constantinople that the preservation of the Orthodox space from “Catholic re-conquest” be done even with the help of the Ottomans!

In these circumstances, the Holy See, although prudent, will again openly declare the intentions of the West to penetrate the part since the appearance of the “*Despotate of Epirus*” and hence, it was rightly called the *Arbërian Byzantine*, to take over the falling edifice of Byzantium, before it fell prey to the Nemanja dynasty of Rascia or the Bulgarians, who were strengthening to its detriment and day by day taking their place giving the whole affair an unpredictable and dangerous twist for the West. This development for the West was as worrying as the loss of Constantinople’s defensive power in the East in the war with the Seljuk Turks. Thus, Pope Innocent IV, openly sided with Charles I of Anjou, a promising European force to incite him first against the German king, Manfred of Hohenstaufen, and then against Byzantium itself.⁴⁷⁹

He won these wars, first in 1266 at the Battle of Benevento against the Germans and then against Michael II of Byzantium. Pope Innocent IV will do so in a language other than the one used by the Holy See, which consistently sought to separate matters of ecclesiastical union from those of politics which, in fact, had prompted the concern of the West, since the East’s

⁴⁷⁹ The circumstances of the establishment of Manfred Hohenstaufen’s rule in Epirus are not so clear. It is only known that at this time, an anti-Byzantine uprising had broken out, which Georg Akropolites calls “*an uprising of the Albanian people*” (τῶν Ἀλβανιτῶν ἐγὼς), with the Byzantine administration in complete disarray and the Byzantine governor himself, Constantine Habarani, falling victim to a conspiracy hatched by the despot Michael II Angelos of Epirus. Apparently this was considered the most opportune moment for Manfred to begin implementing his ambitious plan in the East. In a private act, drafted in Durrës sometime before February 1258, Manfred Hohenstaufen was the lord of Durrës, Vlora, Berat and the “heights of Spiranica”. (See: Xhufi, Pëllumb “*Nga palelogët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 106-111)

ability or inability to withstand existential challenges, such as that of the Ottoman penetration, depended on its future and that of the entire Christianity.

Of course, the main goal of the Anjou, in agreement with the Pope, in their efforts to conquer the insecure Byzantine edifice, at least in most of Illyricum, was conquering the lands already known as belonging to the Arbërians and placing them under supervision, though all this, as a balance against the Rascians, Greeks and Bulgarians, resulting in a kingdom of their own, which would appear as a permanent ally of the West and Western Christianity in general, where Arbëria was seen as an important point towards the return of the Roman Empire to the East, although most of the Arbërian feudal lords belonged to the Eastern Church. Even though Charles I of Anjou had some conversations with the Zhupans of Rascia (Stefan Nemanja) and the Bulgarians on the eve of landing in the rest of the Adriatic, trying to ally them to his own plans (by reaching certain secret alliances with the Rascians, such as those for Dioclea and Ragusa), this did not change the attitude towards the role and place of the land of Arbër in this development with as many local factors related to Byzantium, or having an interest in its weakening or collapse. Though, focusing on the space of Arbërian Byzantium (namely part of Epirus, Dardania, and Macedonia as an impassable gateway that always opened its doors to Constantinople), Charles I of Anjou sought to find an “alibi” in his entitlement to his hereditary line over Manfred's possessions in Arbëria, turning into his vassals Manfred's collaborators in Arbëria. Thus, Charles I of Anjou appointed Gaco Kinardi, a relative of Manfred's slain deputy Philip, as his successor in Arbëria. It is known that before landing on the coast of Arbëria, by means of two Catholic priests: John of Durres and Nicholas of Arbëria, he had established a good relationship with some of the aristocrats and nobles of Arbëria. As trustees of King Charles and his great ally, Pope Gregory X, they made several trips between Naples and Durres, conveying the king's messages to the leaders of Arbëria.⁴⁸⁰

With the promise for their unification and strengthening towards independence under the Catholic cross, Charles I of Anjou had no difficulty in gaining over many of the nobles and lords of Arbëria, having descended on Durrës in 1272 and from there, with a well-prepared army for another war against Michael II, he managed to reinstate their properties and possessions to the Arbërian lords which Byzantium had taken from them after their return. As during the further penetrations on the mainland, the well-known Arbërian families were rewarded with offices and large properties, Charles I of Anjou had established all the necessary circumstances for the formation of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” (*Regnum Albaniae*) so that he would also proclaim himself “*King of Arbëria*” (*Rex Albaniae*).

Among these circumstances, which will suit his performance in Arbëria, however, one should mention those preceding the time he will take measures to be recognized by Arbërians as an eternal sovereign “free of force and coercion”. That meant an agreement under which Charles I of Anjou recognized the nobles and lords of Arbëria as preserving all the privileges granted to them by the early Byzantine empire, as well as respecting all their good customs and traditions.⁴⁸¹ Preservation of property and guarantees given to local feudal lords and despots were a prerequisite for accepting vassalage, which pleased them, but also the new owners, no matter what crowns they appeared with.

Charles I Anjou also acted on these principles, proclaiming “*Regnum Albaniae*” and himself “*Rex Albaniae*” in Naples, on February 21, 1272.⁴⁸²

The establishment of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, in 1272, which for fourteen years survived internal and external challenges, represents an important factor, not only for Arbëria,

⁴⁸⁰ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Part, Tiranë, 2002, p. 240.

⁴⁸¹ Among these circumstances, however, are mentioned those dealing with the missionaries that Charles I of Anjou sent to the nobles and feudal lords of Arbëria. It was about some local Catholic clergy. (See: *Acta Albaniae*. I, 802).

⁴⁸² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Part, Prishtinë, 1969, pp. 188/189

who until then had been among the most dedicated in protecting the Byzantium edifice, as they felt it as their own, but also of other factors from both within and without, as the Arbërian lands again became an important hub determining the relations of power between East and West.

Thus, in the new circumstances as Byzantium could no longer be sustained, while the West had made it known that Arbërians and Arbëria, despite their dispersal in two rites and the consequences that this ecclesiastical reality might bring, were the ones who could turn into a significant Western power in Byzantine space they could rely on and even build on them a wide dam to protect against Ottoman incursions, would face the two challenges of the two “internal” fronts. On the one hand from what appeared to be remnants of Byzantium, though was none other than a Bulgarian-Greek mix, and on the other hand, from the tribal despot Rascians (Nemanja), who had shown a penchant for double games, mostly damaging to the Arbërians and their social and political structures, from those of the nobility to their principalities.

In this war, the already disintegrated Byzantines demanded that at all costs they regain the lost power over the Westerners in the lands of Arbëria, as they were of special strategic importance because water and land routes between East and West passed through them, whose supervision in addition to political power meant economic power, but also that Arbërians, until then defenders of Byzantium, in accordance with the circumstances brought about by the development of feudalism and the creation of autonomous feudal lords, with their feudal lords were emerging as an autonomous factor on which they built independent power. While Rascia, aided by the Greeks, saw in the further strengthening of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” a double danger: on the one hand, their great factorization in Illyricum, and this could not be done without cost to their ever-increasing open claims to appearing as heirs to the fleeing Byzantine Empire. On the other hand, for the Rascians, it was unacceptable for Arbërians and their kingdom, although the Arbërian population mostly belonged to the Eastern rite, to become supporters for the growing Catholicism in this part of Byzantium, as allegedly through its support the West would gain an opportunity to penetrate further into Constantinople and one day conquer it altogether.

So, unlike the Byzantine government, which whenever returned, as after the return of Constantinople in 1261 by Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus, nevertheless was cautious in preserving the Arbërian nobility in strengthening rather than weakening it, turning it into a defensive dam against the West’s penetrations into the eastern part, the Rascians pursued opposing goals: those of subjugating the Arbërian factor through social and political absorption and submission as it would be done in the time of Stefan Dušan.

In these dual accounts between Byzantium for its strengthening in the Arbërian part and of Rascia for it to win the title-deeds over the dying Eastern Empire, the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” had to be stopped at all costs before it became a key factor that could finally turn the civil war of the cross in favor of Catholicism, and with it the line of Emperor Theodosius from the fourth century onwards to the East, to the point where the West cared, but now that it was back in line with the Ottomans.

“KINGDOM OF ARBËRIA” AND RASCIAN CONQUESTS

Viewed from the point of East-West interest spheres and the broader relations outlined in the long struggle for power between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the performance of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” and with it of Charles I of Anjou, “*King of Arbëria*”, rightly opens

the issue of the importance of the Arbërian factor from the Middle Ages as well as its extremely great role in determining the boundary of the spheres of interest on one side or the other. Although Albanian historiography has largely overlooked the burdens of well-known ideological concepts of the past and lack of professionalism, Serbian, Greek and Russian historiography has tried to lessen it, seeing it only as a “*failed attempt, or as an insert among the frequent of that nature of the papacy and the Anjou dynasty to weaken Byzantium by using and manipulating the Arbërian population to those purposes*”,⁴⁸³ however, what happened during the fourteen years of the emergence of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” represents more than an open war between East and West for their own interests, which necessarily affected the vital and cultural interests of those involved, turning them into opponents and even enemies, as had happened with some of the Arbërian nobles and lords left under Byzantium (Gjin Muzaka, Lord of the area of Dibra and that of Berat and others), who would fight on the side of Byzantium, though there will be those, as was the case with Pal Gropa, who, although outside the sovereignty of Charles I of Anjou and the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, will take the side of his vassals, by which all the possessions he had in the part of Dibra and Ohër will be recognized, even when announcements come that he will be on the side of the Byzantines against him.⁴⁸⁴

Various data show that mobilization for and against the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” will be on one side for the Orthodox cross and the East and on the other for the Catholic cross and the West. In this war that was to decide on the relocation of the Theodosius line from the fourth century and that of the final division of the churches and their open hostility in 1054, the Arbërian factor no longer had only a simple role of the one with which accounts were settled, as had been the case until then, including the time of the “*Despotate of Epirus*” which was to decide on the ratio of power between the Byzantines, but also had the role of an accountant, in the great reckoning of the two wings of the Empire of formerly, fighting for as many shares as possible. In these circumstances, some of the nobles, feudal lords and gentry of Arbëria, who had lost faith in Byzantium and its power, already knew that it was not only the royal crown of Arbëria at the head of Charles I of Anjou, brought from Naples what pushed them to protect it. Moreover, it was the social position of the builder of the kingdom, where they were already united almost everywhere in their lands, and for the first time they saw that they were fighting for an internal power, which though overseen by the outside, was returning into a state of their own and acting as such. For more, a feeling of self-ownership, which had to be strengthened and adopted for as much as possible, even though it came from abroad, the Arbërian population gained even as Michael VIII Palaeologus succeeded, through the promises sent by various emissaries, in 1275, in sparking several uprisings of local feudal lords linked in various forms to the Greeks, who would declare themselves Arbërians to incite others on the pretext that the nobles who had come from Italy and France had usurped many of local properties and they treated the local population as conquerors.⁴⁸⁵

The feudal lords, nobles, counts and gentry of Arbëria, despite some upheavals, such as those that appeared for a time with the Blinishti and Sguraj, will still support Charles I of Anjou in the war against Byzantium. This will be done even as Palaeologus, thanks to the help coming from the Greek and Rascian volunteers, fanatics of the Orthodox cross, will reach the walls of Durrës.

Before the “*Byzantine connection*” took Durrës, in which, in addition to the Greeks and Rascians, there were also some noble Arbërians, whose properties were divided by the “*border of the churches of the Orthodox rite with the Catholic one*” and in those

⁴⁸³ Ostrogrorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 281.

⁴⁸⁴ Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 124.

⁴⁸⁵ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, First Part, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 189.

circumstances they were fighting for the first time “on opposite sides”, the decisive battle would take place for Berat, where the Byzantines and their allies were concentrated, whose primary goal was the overthrow of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”. King Charles I of Anjou was obliged to undertake a campaign in these rebellious parts which had joined the Byzantines, even though it plunged into a civil war the nobles and counts of Arbëria, of those who were to present the main nucleus of “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”. In order for it to be less war with each other and more confrontation with Byzantium, Charles I of Anjou made an alliance with what appeared to be the remnants of the “Despotate of Epirus”, which was ruled by the despot Nikephoros and seemed to have influence in this part, especially among some Arbërian feudal lords. He was proclaimed vassal of Anjouine King and handed over to him the castles of Butrint, Sopot, and Porto-Palermo. With this, Nikephoros, who until then stood between Byzantium and Charles I of Anjou as the main exponent of the West in the war against the Empire of Constantinople settled for the West, thus accepting the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, despite the fact that he continued not to be recognized but rather fought by some Arbërian nobles on the part of the Palaeologans, who may be said to no longer concerned with the plight of Byzantium, but rather of survival in these parts, though this was like double-edged swords, as they had become a determining factor between east and west.⁴⁸⁶

To prevent their disintegration, which would be to the detriment of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” and therefore to the detriment of the West and to the benefit of Byzantium, which was no longer Byzantium, but rather a creature held by the Slavs, Bulgarians and Greeks - although they played with the West at its expense - Charles I of Anjou made another attempt to unite Arbëria around himself. In this context, he released a number of noble Arbërian insurgents from Italian prisons, among them Gjin Muzaka, together with Dhimitër Zgura, Kasnec and Giuliem Blinishti and others.⁴⁸⁷

As will be seen, the release from exile of these nobles will not be able to save Charles I of Anjou from the ruin that was on the verge. The fate of the Anjouans was decided in Berat, as that war ended with a heavy loss for the Anjouine forces and that part of the nobility and Arbërian gentry that were on their side. The commander of the Anjou, Hugo de Sully, was taken prisoner, while the rest of his forces were able to find protection by taking refuge in the castle of Vlora. Thus, the Byzantines, and with them some Arbërian nobles, had managed to prevent the expansion of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” to the south, which would create the conditions for Michael VIII Palaeologus to appear victorious. Why would he not do this on the spot, it had to do with the fact that the Seljuk Turks had blown up the borders of the Empire and conquered Pelagonia.⁴⁸⁸

Despite the return of attention from the East, the Palaeologus did not give up his commitment to bring down the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” as soon as possible, which was seen by him and others as a bridge across the West to Constantinople. The papacy, which was following with concern the developments on the eastern shores of the Adriatic, where a great battle between East and West was already taking place, could not allow the West to suffer a great defeat from Byzantium, which could pose as some revenge against the Fourth Crusade when the Catholics invaded Constantinople and destroyed many of its cultural values. Therefore, he will be committed to launching Catholic volunteers from Italian, French, Maltese and even Spanish countries in defense of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, where on the one hand he decided on the further campaign of the West towards the East, and on the other hand, the East, could be protected by a premature end which would come in this way. Thus,

⁴⁸⁶ See: Camillo, Riccio: “*Genealogia di Carlo I, Anjo*”, Neapel, 1857.

⁴⁸⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 244.

⁴⁸⁸ D. Geanakoplos: “*Emperor Michael Paleologus*”, p. 343, according to Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 132.

the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” could become a symbol of the West’s triumph, or the tomb of Byzantium.

And, that being the case, it was expected that the spiritual inspirer of the project, the papacy, with a very dramatic connotation, would turn to the West for help. For its part, the Catholic countries of the West, for the first time, heard of the “Kingdom of Arbëria” and its importance to the interests of the Western cross, which were of a much broader nature than those motivated “by the cross” and the divisions around it, as it showed the most sensitive point that could be exploited to defend against the Ottomans and the penetration of Islam into the old continent, which had begun to terrify the Europeans.

The dramatic call for help to the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, viewed from Western interests, was more than a help to a country threatened by the “Byzantine rage” of the Palaeologans, much of which had been on his side. It was about a new papal policy based on the doctrine of “Roman universalism”, proclaimed by Pope Nicholas III, which was made possible after the death of Pope Gregory X (1276).

As is well known, Pope Gregory X was one of the proponents who kept afloat, as far as the tense East-West circumstances allowed, the Roman-Byzantine union as the last link that could protect Christianity before the Ottoman conquest. But, evidently, it could no longer be sustained, as this had gone to the detriment of the interests of the West, which had begun to be seriously tested with its ally the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, being attacked from all sides, meanwhile that Charles I of Anjou could not act outside the concept of the Holy See, which required some “coordination” with the Byzantines, who were still seen as a dam against the Ottomans. Upon ascending the throne of the French Papacy Martin IV, the Roman curia was determined to link the position of the sovereign Arbëria, i.e. the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, with the “recovery of the Roman Empire usurped by the Palaeologans”, a project that Arbëria raised in the degree of a missionarism, almost similar to that of the Crusades.⁴⁸⁹

Of course, a large part of the Arbërian feudal lords and nobles, aware that the Byzantines were already running out of time and that relying on them would mean at the same time worsening their own position visa-vis the West, which was not facing collapse as Constantinople did, the support will come to them from the West, in the first place, they will experience as an aid to their strengthening by means of a royal crown, on the other hand that it was also in the service of the Anjou and the preservation of their presence in this part of the world in fierce rivalry with Byzantium and its interests. Clearly, the feudal lords and nobles of Arbëria as well as the growing layer of local nobles will fight sincerely in defense of their Kingdom even when they will be forced by successive Byzantine attacks, aided by the Bulgarians, Greeks and especially Rascians, to accept the loss that befell them by the end of 1281.

This loss did not come from a ratio of the forces in that war, which they could continue to resist, but rather from the partial withdrawal of the forces of the First Charles Anjou from the defenses of Durrës due to the return to Italy to extinguish a great uprising, which had erupted in Sicily, as part of the Byzantine cunningness, which, seeing that in the lands of Arbëria, in spite of some internal divisions, he was invincible, due to the determination of most of the Arbërians, despite many hesitations and internal divisions due to the occurrence of various and opposing sides, to defend their kingdom, put into play the king of Aragon, who attacked Sicily and thus sealed the fate of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” as a project of the West based on the Arbërian factor and its growing role.

After this deception, which weakened the military force of Charles I, the Anjou were unable to defend the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”. Even the efforts of the Arbërian feudal lords and nobles for this were in vain, despite the fact that most of them sincerely committed

⁴⁸⁹ Norden: “*Papstum und Byzanz*”, p. 489; Nicol, D.M.: “*The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos 1100-1460*”, Washington, 1968; Janin, R: “*Constantinople bizantine*”, Paris, 1964.

themselves to it. The new Byzantine emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus, greatly aided by the allies he had found in some noble and generous Arbërians, who had not been included in the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” or who would leave it in accordance with the movement of the front lines and those who were maneuvering to achieve this, continued the attacks to conquer the rest of the cities of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, restoring them and exercising great terror against the “traitors of Orthodoxy”, who indeed, more than Catholicism, defended their interests and saw that for the first time they could express themselves in a state of their own, whether it was a foreigner or vassal, as in those circumstances this was an almost inevitable way. After Vlora, Kruja and finally Durrës fell. In 1286, the Anjou left the lands of Arbëria and they again fell under the rule of the fragile Byzantium in every respect.⁴⁹⁰

The departure of the Anjouans from the lands of Arbëria after fourteen years of rule and construction of the throne of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” left deep traces in Arbëria, as on the one hand the former belief that Byzantium was the foundation and their only roof to which they could lean against, while on the other side the Western factor had emerged, in which those that had been lost in the East or which could inevitably be lost could be found. So from that time onwards, Byzantium, as it appeared - tied to the canister of the Rascians, Greeks, Bulgarians and unable to withstand the Ottoman invasions - for many of the feudal lords and nobles of Arber became not only unacceptable, but even harmful. So from that time onwards, Byzantium, as it appeared - tied to the canister of the Rascians, Greeks, Bulgarians and unable to withstand the Ottoman invasions - for many of the feudal lords and nobles of Arbëria became not only unacceptable, but even harmful. This awareness, which had already begun to prevail among most of them, caused the Byzantines to oppose it everywhere, which resulted in a turbulent situation, as they could nowhere restore the former administrative or ecclesiastical order, and less so to have the trust of the spiritual protector. On the contrary, in time, and after many of them had seen where the river was flowing to, the feudal lords and nobles of Arbëria began to raise their heads in defense of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, for the sole reason that during its time many of them increased and strengthened their social and political positions, while the connection with the West had opened a direct way for them to trade and circulate goods on both sides of the Adriatic, which had not happened before, or even when it did, others appeared as main intermediaries and beneficiaries.

In addition to the economic and political prospects offered by the return to the West, being was close to it and connected by land and sea, while from the Byzantium and Asian part, which had long since seceded, came also the threat of the Slav-Orthodox factor led by Rascia and its Nemanjaj dynasties, who, from the Fourth Crusade onwards, threatened them from all sides, always narrowing their space. Therefore, turning to the West would also mean protection from incessant Rascian invasions, although even this strategy will not always help them, because there will be those among the Western countries, who, in connection with various alliances with them, played various games with Byzantium and the Slavs, among which the most common were those of Venice with Rascia and those of the Hungarians and Germans with them, through secret agreements by means of which they were encouraged to occupy as many as possible of the southern areas.⁴⁹¹

However, efforts to restore the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, although ill-connected and outside any joint power run by a local center, will not go unnoticed. There will be moments when the nobles and feudal lords of Arbëria will be proclaimed followers of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, regardless of the fact that they will miss a central crown, which the Anjou had brought with its benefits shining for years.

⁴⁹⁰ For more on Anjou defeat see: Shuflaj, Millan: “*Serbët dhe Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 50; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*” I, 2002, p. 243.

⁴⁹¹ See: “*Acta Albaniae Veneta*”. I no. 141-145.

But it will be precisely the Rascians who took on the role of the central government of Byzantium to fight at all costs not only the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, but also any effort that would lead Arbërians to maintain ties with the West. So Rascia used the departure of the Anjou, with whom they had some “substantive” agreements in the North, to conquer much of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”. They penetrated from East and Northeast, from where they conquered Durrës, which they held for some time.

Since the despot of Rascia, Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282-1321),⁴⁹² had already conquered Skopje and Prizren, he sought to penetrate other parts of the south as far as Ohër, so that there, in that important triangle, he could concentrate, as the Bulgarians once did. But Ohër would be defended by the Arbërian nobleman, Progon Skurra, who held the high Byzantine title of *grand hierarch*, and his wife, Eudocia, was the granddaughter of the Byzantine emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus, which met the “formal” conditions for him to be the viceroy of Byzantium in those parts.⁴⁹³

This caused the Rascians, in 1299, to retreat over the Shkumbin River, while Byzantium held southern Arbëria. It was an agreement reached between Rascia and Byzantium, which was strengthened by Milutin’s marriage to Simonida, the five-year-old daughter of Andronicus II. The treaty of friendship between the Rascians and the Byzantines increased the influence of the Byzantines on the tribal Rascians, being expressed with successive expansions of the territories that separated them from the lands of Arbëria.⁴⁹⁴

That the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” founded by the royal court of the Anjou and led by Charles I, who was proclaimed “*King of Arbëria*”, after its occupation by Byzantium and the tribal despotate of Rascia and the division between them into two parts, will continue to be the political and state preoccupation of the Arbërian feudal lords, nobles and gentry, this will be shown by the wars that took place over the next eight years against the Byzantines and the Rascian invaders, who, for no moment, managed to stabilize their conquests in these parts even when it seemed that they had achieved certain military victories. This made the Anjou, and also the Pope, refrain from giving up “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” as a force factor and ally of Catholic Christianity on the other side of the Adriatic, opening its doors to this important part towards Constantinople. Thus, the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” had become a beacon for the West, where they hoped that one day they could be protected from the Ottomans. This hope, however, turned the Arbërian countries into a log of successive matches and wars, which lasted for nearly two centuries, resulting in a third winner - the Ottomans.

In this long struggle of occurrence in the war between the crosses, but also of being or not being in relation to the Rascian occupation, the “crown” of Arbëria was already sought by the feudal lords and nobles of Arbëria, who were necessarily lined up against Byzantium, knowing that the crowning of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” protected them from Rascian hegemony, from which they could lose everything.⁴⁹⁵

So this time, in the fight against the Rascians, the Arbërians did not demand that the “royal crown” be coming down from abroad, as had happened sixteen years ago when it came with the First Charles of Anjou, after being proclaimed in Naples on the 21st of August 1272,

⁴⁹² Stefan Uroš II known as Milutin (1281-1321) is the second in line of the Nemanjaj dynasty. The title “*stefan*”, held by the Nemanjajs, is Hungarian and means “prince”. Holding of the title “*stefan*” in the Rascian dynasts shows their connection but also their vassalage with the Catholic countries, first with Venice and then with the Germans and Hungarians, who always passed through the Holy See and their interests for them, so to achieve two strategic goals with the Nemanjaj at once: on one hand the strengthening and expansion of the influence of the autochthonous population of central Illyricum (Triballi) and on the other hand that with the strengthening of the Nemanjaj weakens Byzantium in the most sensitive part, in Central Illyricum. Of course, this strategy will also be used by the Nemanjaj for their interests of expanding power, always using the favors of Rome and Constantinople, with the transition from one rite to another turning into their strong political and diplomatic weapon among the most powerful of the time.

⁴⁹³ That the Arbërian nobleman, *Progon Skurra*, had the title of great heteriarch, is evidenced by an epigraph in the church of St. Clement of Ohrid in 1295.

⁴⁹⁴ Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 348.

⁴⁹⁵ See: “*Acta Albaniae I, 1656*.”

but sought it as an internal force, which would unite them, to replace the state of occupation and vassalage with that of royal consciousness instead. Thanks to this war and commitment, lasting for nearly three decades - and as will be seen will weaken the Byzantine and Rascian conquest in the lands of Arbëria - Philip of Taranto, grandson of the First Charles of Anjou landed and returned Durrës, bringing defeat to the Byzantines. Thus, in 1304, in Durrës, the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” will come back to life again, now from within and in full cooperation with the Arbërian factor, aware of the role of the throne and its importance as it was clear by now who sought to protect it and who destroyed it to the ground.⁴⁹⁶

The restoration of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, under the leadership of Philip of Taranto, with the office “*Despot of Romania and king of Arbëria*”, in relation to the locals will represent an even higher degree of independence of Arbërian feudal lords, nobles and gentry, who had fought for it to be in line with their interests for as much internal power as possible.

In fact, this was requested and presented as the main condition of the Anjou intervention in the Arbërian space. Since a good part of the Arbërian nobles involved in the territories occupied by Rascia (it was about what happened during the time of Despot Milutin 1282-1321),⁴⁹⁷ as well as those under the Byzantines and despots of Epirus, were ready to revolt, in the spring of 1304, their representatives had arrived in the Neapolitan court with the proposal for a new Arbërian-Anjouan connection. On September 5, 1304, Philip of Taranto addressed the noble Arbërians of Durres and Arbëria that he would recognize all the rights and privileges granted by his grandfather, Charles I of Anjou.⁴⁹⁸ On this occasion, it should be said that among the Arbërian leaders who joined the Anjou were Shpata, Bua, Zenebishti, Arianiti, Sgura, Blinishti and others, a very wide circle regardless of why Muzakaj are not mentioned there, who tried to even further keep the balance between the two sides.⁴⁹⁹

As soon as he regained the royal throne of Arbëria, Philip of Taranto solemnly gathered in Durrës the feudal lords, nobles and generosity to give them new property promises and to granting them titles and various offices which they did not have before or restoring some that were lost during the time of Charles I of Anjou, who during his efforts in the war against Byzantium had not always been able to understand why some Arbërian nobles and gentry on his side were still fighting for the accounts of the Greeks and Rascians. It is noted that Philip of Tarento, had not only restored the properties to the well-known feudal lord of Arbëria, Giuliem Blinishti, whose uncle Charles I of Anjou, after some disagreements, had sent into exile, but also appointed him Marshal of Arbëria. The same thing was repeated in many cases, and this had restored confidence in the representative of Charles I.⁵⁰⁰

It is said that at this time the Anjouans spread their policy throughout the Adriatic coast. They established very close relations with the Croatian authorities and especially with the princes of Bribir, the Subics and the Babonics of Vodica. They also won the Hungarian crown. In these circumstances, the idea of the Crusade going through Illyricum to the Holy Land was introduced to the Anjouans.⁵⁰¹

The increase of Philip’s power in Arbëria was at odds with the similar intentions of the Rascian despot, Uroš II Milutin, in whose hands were some of the lands of Arbëria up to Ishmi and, as well as Philip of Taranto, who used the title of “*King and Chieftain of Arbëria*”.

⁴⁹⁶ Idem.

⁴⁹⁷ For more on Rascian conquests see: Stojanović, S: “*Istorija srpskog naroda*“, Beograd, 1926, pp. 141-147.

⁴⁹⁸ *Acta Albaniae*, I, no. 637.

⁴⁹⁹ Idem.

⁵⁰⁰ In a letter dated 28 April 1311, Philip of Tarentum, Robert’s brother, is called “*Dominus Regni et Despotus Romanie*”. (See *Acta Albaniae* and G.Monti “*Recerche sul domino angioino in Albania*”, Studio Albanesi, V-VI, 1935-6, p. 182).

⁵⁰¹ Shuflaj, Milan: “*Serbët dhe Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, 2004, p. 51.

Although the Anjou had an agreement “for a joint war against Byzantium”, since the time of Charles I of Anjou, which was to some extent preserved,⁵⁰² however, in the new circumstances, the Rascians were not interested in strengthening Philip of Taranto and neither on the return of the imperial crown to the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”. They will show this as early as the campaign of Philip of Taranto in 1308 on Durrës, taking the side of the Byzantines, helping them keep the city in the hands of the Byzantines.⁵⁰³ The Rascians, even after Durrës is taken over by Taranto forces, will continue to help the city fall into the hands of the Byzantines, or their own. From 1312-1315, they would enter it several times, so that in the spring of 1318, after a new offensive south of Mat, they conquered Kruja and Durrës.⁵⁰⁴ On this occasion, Uroš II added the “*King of Arbëria*” to the list of his titles (*Urošio Servie, Chelmie, Dioclie ac Albanie regi*).⁵⁰⁵

This brought a special meaning to the whole issue, because the division of the title “*King of Arbëria*” by the Rascians, aimed to give him the idea of its continuation with the Principality of Arbëria, the first Arbërian political formation born in the middle of the 12th century in the territory between Mat and Shkumbin,⁵⁰⁶ which the Rascians might have seen as part of their plans to create a common “kingdom” similar to that of Triballi from antiquity, a conciliatory construct between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, one as a bridge between Rome and Constantinople, which instead of the Byzantine crown would have the Rascian one from the tribal Rascia. This intention gains weight if one takes into account the fact that there will be other despots from the door of the Nemanjaj people who, through their “royal” crowns, mostly from the Vatican and sometimes from Constantinople and church bullae will be used by Despot Uroš II and even by Megazupan Stefan Dušan, the “powerful” (*silni*),⁵⁰⁷ with whom, in the 19th century, the “walls” of the “kingdom of the medieval Serbian state” will be built, will constantly mention Arbania as “*Rascian Arbëria*”.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰² Anjou’s relations with the Nemanjas are known from 1250 when Stefan Nemanja married the French princess, Helen. It was more than clear that the French, who were already claiming to extend into Byzantine space, intended to do for themselves or neutralize the factors that might hinder it in this regard. Among the most important were the Rascians, with whom Charles I of Anjou, in 1273, after uniting the main Arberian territories under the crown of Naples with the title of king of Arbëria (rex Albaniae), to form an alliance with the Rascian despot Nemanja, as he became the guarantor of Rascial interests in the northern territories of Arbëria. This alliance will be repeated in 1308, when the Anjouans confirmed to Uroš II their possessions north of Mat and Ohrid. (See: K. Jireček: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, I, Tiranë, 2010; Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, faqe 148-149; *Acta Albaniae*, I, no. 589.)

⁵⁰³ The reasons why the Rascians were not interested in maintaining their agreements with the Anjouans regarding the “*Kingdom of Arberia*” should be sought in the agreements they concluded with Byzantium by which the Nemanjajs were allowed their further commitments to the Anjouans, already returned by Byzantium, especially those on the coast. Another reason for the breakdown of the agreements with Anjou was the death of the French Helena, mother of Uroš II in 1314, who had served as a link between the French and the Rascians. At the same time, the Anjou inherited the throne of Hungary and with it inherited the traditional enmity of the Hungarian throne with Rascia. (See: C. Jireček: “*Albanien in der Vergangenheit*”, në “*Illyr-alb. Forschung*”, I, p. 73.)

⁵⁰⁴ *Acta Albaniae*, I, no. 526, 626.

⁵⁰⁵ See: *Acta Albaniae*, I, no. 594.

⁵⁰⁶ See: Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 149.

⁵⁰⁷ In many documents, the nickname “*Dushan*” of Megazhupan Stefan Uroš IV is understood as synonymous with the Serbian word for “the powerful” (*Dušan silni*). Dealing with the etymology of the word “*Dushan*”, the famous scholar Shufflay, opposes the position of G. Mayer connecting this word with Slavic origin. Shufflay is of the opinion that this word coincides with that of the Albanian “*dushman*” = powerful, and that this is evidenced by the “powerful” pronoun attached to it in Slavic.

⁵⁰⁸ Megazhupan Stefan Uroš IV, of the Triballi origin, known as “*Dushan*” (1331-1355), was one of the most powerful Rascian rulers, who included the most Arberian lands in the despotate of Rascia. (On the tribal origin of the Nemanjaj, among others see: Harris, J: “*Laonikos Chalkokodyles and the Rise of the Ottoman Turks, Byzantine and Modern Greek*”, *Studies* 27; Ducas “*Historia Turco-Byzantina 1341-1652*”, Bucharest, 1958; Hamer von Josef: “*Historia turkog (osmanskog) carstva*”, I, Zagreb, 1979; Schreiner, P: “*Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*”, I, II, III, Wien, 1975-1979). Zhupan Dushan had begun to conquer Epirus from 1337, Arbëria starting from 1340 and Thessaly finally in 1348. In the acts of the Venetian Republic of 1333 and 1342 he is called “*Stefan, by the grace of God, King of Rascia, Diocletia, Hemlja, Zenta, Arbëria, a large part of the Bulgarian Empire, and almost the entire Roman Empire.*” The reasons why Venice saw Duashan’s “crown” outside the framework of his real power, lie in an agreement they had made with him, by which the Venetians would support him in the fight for new conquests to the south up to the accession to the throne of Constantinople even, provided that they were divided in half. Accounts of this nature have been part of Venice’s policy in the war to

Since Rascia's despot, Uroš II, was greatly strengthened by the help of the Greeks and Bulgarians, Philip of Taranto managed to gather a European coalition of Catholic powers against the Rascians, which included Hungarians and Croats. The Pope also called on French bishops who had filled the churches of Arbëria to help the Anjou. In separate letters, the Pope also invited the Arbërian nobles to turn their weapons against the invaders and do their best against Rascia, the "enemy of religion", as the Pope called the Rascians.

In fact, in the spring of 1319 a number of Arbërian nobles and lords from well-known families: Blinishti, Jonima, Arianiti, Matrënga, Muzaka and others, through the bishop of Kruja, Andreas, called on Pope John XXII that "they were ready to rise up and throw away Rascia's yoke". On this occasion they said that they would abandon the Orthodox rite and accept Catholicism, being ecclesiastically separated from the Rascian invaders.⁵⁰⁹

Pope John XXII will personally turn to Philip of Taranto for help, informing him that he needed his help against the schismatic Byzantines and especially against Despot Uroš. The invitation of Arbërian nobles and lords, as well as that of Philip of Taranto, led the Catholic Church, represented by the Pope of Rome to turn into an instigator and inspirer of the anti-Rascian coalition. For this purpose, he sent the bishop of Kruja, Andrea, to organize the uprising. In addition, with a special letter on the help and importance of the uprising against the Rascians, the Pope will address Manuel Muzaka - Count of Këlcyra (*Comiti Clissanie*), Andre Muzaka - Marshal of the Kingdom of Arbëria (*regni Albanie marescalco*) and Teodor Muzaka – *protosebast*.⁵¹⁰

In July 1319, the first major war of the European allies in defense of the "Kingdom of Arbëria" against the Rascians took place. The Rascians managed to resist the coalition armies and even temporarily occupy Durrës, but were forced to leave because it was taken by the Catalans of Frederick, son of King Frederick III of Sicily, which did not last long because from the beginning of the following year (1320) the Anjou returned there complaining about the behavior of the Durrës people towards them.⁵¹¹

Although the Rascians were soon forced to leave Durrës, with the invasions continuing in the surrounding areas, they would not leave it alone until the civil war broke out in Byzantium between Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus and his nephew and heir, Andronicus III, which would last seven years, providing the Anjouans with the right circumstances to return to Arbëria. It is known that at this time King Robert Anjou had sent his son, Luigi d'Anjou, to Durrës to restore the "Kingdom of Arbëria".⁵¹²

According to some unclear sources, the Anjou remained in Durrës for some time. From there, they used the appropriate circumstances created by the civil war between the Palaeologans, to expand to the south, in the despotate of Berat. This happened in 1328, when it was severely damaged by the Anjouine attack whereupon "the books of Thelog monastery were looted by the French called compagnols".⁵¹³

After three years of civil war, with Byzantium somehow regaining its internal peace, the disintegrating Byzantine Empire tried to oversee several cities, including Berat, which had

maintain its power in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor. (For more: ASV: *Storia documentata*, 231-232, at Plasari, Aurel: "Skënderbeu – një histori politike", Tiranë, 2010, p. 122).

⁵⁰⁹ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 272.

⁵¹⁰ *Acta Albaniae*, I, no. 648; The letter is included with A.Theiner: "Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungariam Sacram Illustrantia, I (1216-1352), Romae, 1859, no.1264, p. 831. As such, the letter presents not only an important document of the time, but also shows an internal state of difficult circumstances subjected to Christians over whom the boundary of the division of churches has been weighing from 1054 onwards, as were the Arbërian lands, where the transgressions of powers are usually accompanied by the change of the ecclesiastical rite from the eastern to the western and vice versa, which had also affected the internal structure on which their spiritual cohesion is based.

⁵¹¹ For more see at A. Kieseweter: "I principi di Taranto e la Grecia (1294-1373), in "Archivio Storico Pugliese", ano LIV, face.I-IV gennaio-dicembre 2001, p. 70, Note 48, and P. Xhufi "Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt", Tiranë, 2009, p. 154.

⁵¹² See *Acta Albaniae*, I, 673, claiming: (*recedeat de Napoli versus pares Duracii et regni Albanie pro ipsius regni recuperatione*).

⁵¹³ See: P. Batiffol: "Les manuscrits grecs de Berat d'Albanie", Paris, 1886, pp. 17-18.

been turned into a despotate and keep some Arbërian nobles connected by granting them titles of despots, recognizing their local authority. Such a high title was granted to Andrea I Muzaka, the powerful lord of the lands between Ohër, Kolonja, and Berat, in which case, in terms of titles, he was equated with the Rascian despots. Other nobles were honored with the high title of *sebastocrators*.⁵¹⁴

The unwritten peace of Andronicus III with the Arbërian gentry and nobles, where Byzantium maintained its influence, nevertheless broke with the coming to the throne of Rascia of Stefan Dušan (1331-1355), who, with the conquest of the lands of Arbëria, turned the Rascian dream of the Triballi for the Imperial Throne. On this occasion he signed a peace treaty with Andronicus III Palaeologus, which, in 1335, turned into a military alliance between the two sides.⁵¹⁵

The military alliance between Rascia and Byzantium gave rise to a major Byzantine military campaign to wipe out all traces of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” and with it the claims of the Anjou to the East.

In the face of these circumstances, the West, which had already turned the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” into a vanguard, had also mobilized the Catholic clergy to organize a new European crusade in defense of Arbëria from the Rascian invasion. The Archbishop of Tivar, Gulliem Adea, by order of Pope John XXII, presented a report to the King of France in 1332, which was later mistakenly given to a monk named Brocard. According to him, in this crusade, the main role would be played by the Arbërian feudal lords, who could bring out 15 thousand cavalry strong, brave men and good warriors.

In this letter, we also find the famous sentence that made him famous in history about the fact that “*although Albanians have a completely different language and unlike from Latin, they have Latin letters in use and in all their books*”.

Among other things, the letter states the following:

“Beware, my Lord, the King, those who we mentioned above (Rascians and their kings) the emperor and the king, and their house, I describe them the way it has been confirmed throughout the Orient, and in most part I know from certain experience. Now one who looks after the care of your attention, and learns more about believing promises, vows, and loyalty of the others, who have been born as a perverse generation and as sons of the disbelief of a low nation and of a perverted family tree, who thinks badly of God, who do not bind by the church, who kill their own parents, do not save even their sons and kill their brothers, etc... To conquer the kingdom of Rascia it would so easy... For, as much as a desire would be enough to have such an action. That kingdom has few, almost no fortified sites, but it is entirely home to villages and huts, with no defensive trenches and no walls inside. The buildings and structures of both the king and other nobles are made of straw and wood. There you can see nowhere palaces or houses made of stone or clay except in the Latin coastal cities... Arbërians, as they are the largest nation, can own on battlefields more than 15 thousand cavalrymen for every war activity. They are brave and skillful warriors, according to their mores and customs. And, since the aforementioned, both the Latins and Arbërians, are oppressed under the unbearable and heavy yoke of slavery of that hated and inhuman rule: the oppressed people, the clergy removed from their positions and humiliated, the bishops and abbots, often imprisoned, nobles stripped of their inheritance and taken captive, churches, both Episcopal and other, plundered and with no rights, ruined and destroyed monasteries, all or each of them would like to dip their hands in the blood of the aforementioned Triballi, if they saw a French prince appear to them, who would make him a commander in their war against the aforementioned Slavic criminals, the enemies of our truth

⁵¹⁴ Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë 2009, pp. 68-70.

⁵¹⁵ *Joanis Contacuzeni ex imperatoria historiarum*, Book IV, Venetiis, ex typogr. B. Jovarina, 1729, Book .II.cap.XXVI, pp. 223-224.

and faith. With the aforementioned Arbërians and Latins, 1000 French cavalrymen and 5000 or 6000 infantrymen, no doubt would easily conquer this entire kingdom."⁵¹⁶

The call for this crusade went unheeded, as the French had some difficulty with the Germans, while the Kingdom of Sicily was also in various conflicts with the Spaniards, which continued to weaken and disable its full commitment to strengthen its intervention further beyond the Adriatic and with this space of Arbëria not to remain prey to the Byzantine and Rascian invasions. Towards the strengthening of the latter, who had already conquered Macedonia and part of Thessaly, as well as the danger of them turning into a main power in Illyricum, so as not to extinguish the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*", as Dušan will do a little later, King Robert of Anjou, as soon as he came to the throne, in 1333, appointed his son as Captain of Durrës and by going to war against the Rascians supported the hopes of the Arbërian feudal lords.

In the efforts to protect the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*" against Dušan, two of the Arbërian feudal lords were of great importance: Tanush Thopia, who owned property between Durrës and Tirana, and Andrea Muzaka, whose property was located between the Shkumbin and Seman rivers.⁵¹⁷

King Robert's other son, Ludovic, in 1336, landed in Durrës with a considerable army and made an agreement with Andrea Muzaka. Muzaka was awarded the title of "*Despot of Arbëria*". Efforts to bring as many Arbërian feudal lords as possible with different properties and titles continued, as it was more than clear that the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*" could succeed in the war against Slavic invasions, only if it was supported by the internal factor and they saw it as their interest.

Tanush Thopia will also benefit from this path. Thopia will also be given the title of "*Count of Arbëria*" and will be given other properties between the rivers Mat and Shkumbin, in which case his principality was recognized in these areas. Thopia will receive another 1000 groshes a year from the income of the Durrës saltworks.⁵¹⁸

With the title of "*Count of Arbëria*", Thopia, as a vassal of the Anjou, kept Durrës for the next 22 years. Afterwards, Durrës occasionally turns into a ground of various attacks and counterattacks, where the power of the Anjou will be preserved, lasting until 1382. At the beginning of that year, Balsha II, ruler of Zeta and Vlora, conquered Durrës. He kept it until 1385, when in the battle of Savra, together with his head he would lose it to Karl Thopia.⁵¹⁹

Despite the involvement of the Arbërian feudal lords in the main positions of the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*", as vassals of the Anjouine King - and this could not have been otherwise in those circumstances - these measures did not prevent Stefan Dušan from invading Arbëria. In 1343 he conquered Kruja. Two years later Berat fell and in 1347 he conquered Vlora and Kanina. But in order to become an "Emperor", as he had anticipated, thus gaining the right to inherit Byzantium, Dušan needed the consent of the other side, that of the West, with which he was constantly in ties and alliances, as his predecessors had done, the Nemanja from the time of Diocletian in the tenth century to Rascia in the twelfth century when they would settle there with the help of the Vatican and the Hungarians.

This western "arm" was Venice, which also had its own accounts with Dušan to weaken Constantinople by increasing its influence in the central and western parts of Illyricum. After all, Dušan and his family had been citizens of Venice for years, and he was constantly approached for help and close connections. These ties were established in 1340 when he

⁵¹⁶ "*Ekskluzive*", Prishtinë, no. 28 August 2002.

⁵¹⁷ Idem, p. 192.

⁵¹⁸ By an agreement with Ludovic in 1338 Tanush Thopia was recognized his principality between Mat and Shkumbin that he had from the Pope of Rome: "*et insuper confirmamus eidem comitatum a Maet usque Scampinum, donatum eidem comiti ut ronitur per dominum summum pontificem*" (See at Shufly, "*Serbët dhe Shqiptarët*" ("*Serbs and Albanians*"), Tiranë, 2004, p. 53.)

⁵¹⁹ See: Shufly, Milan: "*Serbët dhe Shqiptarët*", Tiranë, 2004, p. 56.

pledged that, if necessary, he would send soldiers to Venice (up to 500 cavalry) that he would personally lead. On this occasion Venice granted him and his family the right of Venetian citizenship. Therefore, as a Venetian citizen, in January 1346, from Ragusa, Dušan sent a delegation to Venice to announce the future coronation of the king (*coronatio sua in imperiao Constantinopolitano*) on which occasion he sought an alliance to conquer that Empire.

Of course, for Venice, any such alliance was unacceptable, as it could be an adventure it could not afford. Because, evidently, Venice had a well-known strategy, another to put them in the war, while the benefits themselves. In this situation the Venetians were more pleased with Dušan's conquests and his extension to the East, so they responded with heartfelt congratulations. After this congratulation, Dušan decided to be crowned "Emperor" on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1346 in an assembly in Scupi (Skopje) by the Orthodox Patriarch Joanikij and the Bulgarian Patriarch Simeon of Ternovo. Queen Helena was crowned Empress, while her son Uroš - King, with which the Triballian megazhupan of Rascia had managed to acquire the main regional factors to reach where it dreamed.⁵²⁰

Aside from the parts that once belonged to Justinian's Dardania, which Dušan held as an example and not coincidentally in the ruins of Justiniana Prima (near Scupi) will carry out his ecclesiastical coronation, the self-proclaimed emperor continued his conquests to the south, that is, adding to his "Empire" areas such as "Epirus" and other to the South of Greece, in order to complete his dream of becoming a great "Emperor" there. Dušan was lucky on this journey as he also made use of a plague in 1348, which struck in Europe spread by the Kingdom of the Tartars. At the time when the plague had devastated many parts of central and eastern Illyricum, Dušan continued his invading campaign. He was even helped by the plague, as he met little resistance.⁵²¹

Under these circumstances, Dušan, as he faced more ill people than opponents, entered Epirus and conquered Janina, Arta, and other cities as far as the borders of the Franks-Anjou, at that time, rulers of Butrint and Lepanthos, Brienes, of the former Doukas of Athens.

It is known that Arbërians, being hostile to the Greeks in the time of Andronicus III, joined Dušan. In this way they managed to preserve their lands and property, which had long ago been threatened by the Byzantines.⁵²²

As he saw no danger from a divided Byzantium weakened by the internal power struggles between the Palaeologans (who were supported by him) and Katankuzen, supported by Geneva and Hungary and, to avoid any threat from the "Franks", i.e. the Anjou, who could reappear on the side of the nobles and gentry of Arbëria (as in their memory the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*" of the time of Charles and Philip of Taranto, as a Western creature, was increasingly becoming a fixation as compensation for Byzantium which was dissolving), Dušan returned to good relations with Venice. He offered him some of the conquests in this part as well as full support if they decided to conquer Constantinople. Venice, which needed Dušan in an impending war against Hungary and Genoa, which would soon start, congratulated him and granted him more properties in Venice. In order for this support to look as solemn as possible, Venice sent a large Venetian and Ragusan delegation to Rascia headed by Count Nikola Girogi of Bodanica.⁵²³

Relations with Venice and his efforts to benefit as much as possible from them, however, will not help Dušan to be at peace with Hungary's alliance with Genoa. As will be seen, the Hungarians, who claimed Bosnia, Croatia and the Adriatic coast, will gain more and more weight over time. As the Turkish threat grew, and Kantakuzen became increasingly attached

⁵²⁰ Ostrogroski, Georg: "*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 428 and Miklosich, F: "*Monumenta Serbica, Bosnae, Ragusii*", Wien, 1858.

⁵²¹ Dil, Sharl: "*Istorija vizantijskog cartstva*", 1919, p. 97.

⁵²² See: Katakuzenos IV, Chap. 20.

⁵²³ See: Jiriček, Konstandin: "*Historia e Serbëve*", I, Tiranë, 2010, pp. 449-451.

to them in order to regain lost power and win the race with the Palaeologus, Dušan would be encouraged by the Holy See to go to war with the Turks even at the cost of conquering the Byzantine throne in Constantinople.⁵²⁴

He also had the support of the Germans for this job. But it will be an almost unexpected war that broke out between Ludwig of Hungary and Dušan that prevented him not only from taking the flag of a Western Crusade against Turks, as Rome hoped, but to turn it back to the real dimensions of the force he had, of an inevitable loser. Thus, after a year, Dušan's "tower" would soon collapse that he had erected rather thanks to external factors (the internal weakening of Byzantium and the plans of Venice and the Holy See to destroy it forever since in that throe it was not able to turn into a bastion against the Turkish invasions that were approaching Europe), rather than an internal force.⁵²⁵

However, in the summer of 1354, Ludwig entered Belgrade, while Dušan, exhausted by the self-proclaimed and escalating "Emperor's crown", which had begun to weigh on his head, returned to the south, to the monastery of Rudnik. During that winter and spring, Dušan could not be relieved of Hungarian anxiety, although the Venetians would intervene to bring peace between them, as they feared the further strengthening of the Hungarians. But even that intervention did not stop the real fall of Rascia's Tribal "Emperor", as he died in December of that year, the twentieth day of the last month of 1355, somewhere near Nerodime and is buried in Prizren, in the Archangel's Monastery, which he had built himself.⁵²⁶

Although he ended up thinking he had to gain "spiritual" power, while dreaming of becoming emperor of Byzantium, he would turn into a nightmare for his temporary edifice, which would soon crumble down. So, even despite these defeats, Rascia of the Triballian Dušan, in a long war against the Arbërians and their space, aimed at some strategic goals with consequences for further developments and the circumstances through which Illyricum and Southeast Europe in general will pass during five future centuries. Among these strategic goals were:

- To destroy any state nucleus of the Arbërians that would connect them with Byzantium. They targeted nobles and gentry, and their vows that could turn them into factors within the Empire to become its supporters. On this occasion, the "*Despotate of Epirus*" and the role it had played from the Second Crusade onwards were taken into account;

- To destroy any nucleus that would allow for the re-emergence of the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*", similar to that of the Anjou or any other, which would be the result of joint efforts of the Catholic West and the feudal lords, nobles and the rising Arbërian gentry up to secure a supporter of them across the Adriatic, exactly where the dividing line began, and

- And, thanks to this war and victory against the Arbërians, Dušan's Despotate was strengthened as much as possible in order to fight to replace Byzantium, which was already in a state of complete disintegration and, in the face of Ottoman incursions, there was a danger that in order to stay in power anyway, he would begin to form alliances with the Ottomans to the detriment of the Catholic West.

Dušan knew that the Papacy and other European countries, in order to prevent this development, which in some forms had begun to come to life, were able to give the Rascian trial even the crown of Byzantium. It is at this time that Dušan's efforts to get as close as possible to the West (Venice and the Holy See), although his campaign against the Catholics is well known, will be so alarming that a number of noble Arbërians will ask the Pope to take protective measures. There is a well-known correspondence between Dušan and the Holy See,

⁵²⁴ The encouragement that Dushan received from the Holy See is best evidenced by a *breve* that the Archbishops of Tivar received from the Pope, which began with the laudatory formula for the "kingdom" of Rascia: "*Carissimo in Christo filio nostro regi Rassie illustri*" at Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 94.

⁵²⁵ Jiriček, Konstandin: "*Historia e Serbëve*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 451.

⁵²⁶ See: Orbin, on page 268, writes that Stefan Dushan died of fever in Nerodime, although this chronicler is not credible, which makes even this data to be taken with caution as it too can be conjured up.

where he apologizes for “misunderstandings”,⁵²⁷ that a little later he would not only call “disobedient”, but as one letter from Pope Innocent V states in 1354, he announced that all property would immediately be returned to the Latin churches and that abandoning priests are given the opportunity to return and work freely. On this occasion, Dušan called the Pope “Father of Christianity, the representative of the truth of Christ and descendant of St. Peter”.⁵²⁸

Unlike Byzantium, which, as needed, often respected feudal lords, nobles and Arbërian gentry trying to keep them in service, always trying to strengthen their power, in the form of local governments with certain competencies (themes, nobilities and principalities), and keep it bound to himself, Dušan did the opposite, even when during the celebrations and promotions of his crown, through the charts he proclaimed, as did his predecessors from Uroš II and onwards, constantly adding the attribute “*King of the Arbanas*” (Albanians).⁵²⁹

This shows that he, as a Triballi, had in mind the strength of the Arbërian factor and the connections from antiquity with it, which he wanted to oversee and use for his own purposes, but without allowing it in any way to be factorized. Thus, in accordance with this position, even when solemnly vowing to respect local feudal lords and promising loyalists and in some cases even giving them more than they had (property or titles of zhupans, voyvodes, etc.), however, in the lands of Arbëria, where his army entered, he had also his own rulers who established themselves as powerful administrators.⁵³⁰

This way of ruling, in accordance with the logic of the strongest, which also characterized the relations between the Illyrian-Thracian tribes in antiquity (Dardanians, Triballi, Macedonians and others) and their internal wars, was followed by measures coming from his efforts made to strengthen the Orthodox Church, based on ecclesiastical bullae, which, although it should be taken with caution, as many of them were forged in the 19th century to create a false image for political purposes,⁵³¹ large estates and entire Arbërian villages will be granted to them.⁵³²

What will stand out during Dušan’s rule in the Arbërian lands is that he made great efforts to turn the most vital part, ancient Dardania, and Macedonia into an institutional and spiritual “nucleus”. This is what the Bulgarians once did, especially in the time of King Simeon. Thus, Prizren and Scupi (Skopje) became the main centers of Rascian zhupania, where he established church institutions. On the castles and old Dardanian churches and other strongholds of the local feudal lords, which reflected the historical and spiritual identity of the Arbërians, the side of the Orthodox cross prevailed. Thus, the not-so-long occupation of Dušan (for nine years) highlights the efforts for the spiritual conversion of the Arbërian ethnic space that took place with violent and repressive measures (both administrative and ecclesiastical) unprecedented until then, in accordance to the interests of the Orthodox Church and Constantinople.

⁵²⁷ For more see: Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska bišćupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb, 1986, pp. 100-114.

⁵²⁸ See the letter that Dushan sent to Pope Innocent V in 1354, where he apologized and asked to submit in full to the Holy See. In the letter that the Pope returned to Dushan, he is congratulated for his turn and promised all-round support. On this occasion, the Pope calls Dushan “*Rex Rasie*” - *King of Rascia*, an ecclesiastical title that the Holy See used for the feudal lords and autonomous despots in the Byzantine part, who had to be empowered to weaken Byzantium, but who remained outside any state ingerence, as viewed in the nineteenth century by Serbian historians, who, on ecclesiastical tables, also project political stories beyond historical realities. (Jiriček, Konstantin: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 449.)

⁵²⁹ See: *Acta Albaniae I*, no. 594.

⁵³⁰ See: Rexha, Enver: “*Historiografija serbe për Kosovën (XIII-XIX)*”, Prishtinë, 2009, pp. 11-115.

⁵³¹ See: Šekularac, Božidar: “*Dukljansko-zetske povleje*”, Titograd, 1987, p. 43; Ivanović, R: “*Dečansko vlastelinstvo*”, Beograd, 1954.

⁵³² For more about the properties of the Arbërs that were donated to the Orthodox churches (that of Dečan, Prizren, and also of Hilandar on the Holy Mountain in Greece, see: Miloš, Milojević: “*Dečanske hristovulje*”, Beograd, 1880; Novaković, St: “*Zakonski spomenici srpskih država srednjeg veka*”, Beograd, 1912; Solovjev, Aleksandar: “*Odabrani spomenici srpskog prava srednjeg veka*”, Beograd, 1912; Ivanović, R: “*Dečansko vlastelinstvo*”, Beograd, 1954.

In this action we see the political efforts of the Orthodox Church to identify the ecclesiastical consciousness with the ethnic one, in which case the former, the ecclesiastical, determined the latter, which will be the source of manipulation of religious affiliation with the national one in the nineteenth century among the Greeks and Serbs, regardless of the fact that there were also Orthodox among the Russians, Romanians, Albanians and others.⁵³³

Even before Dušan came to power and Rascia extended its conquests to the Arbërian lands (in Dardania and Macedonia), an open war emerged of the Orthodox Church and the Rascian invaders against the Catholic believers of the Arbërian lands, which cannot be explained otherwise but as a well-measured strategy with a dual purpose: on the one hand to prevent Arbërians from preserving their affiliation of the western church, partiality and a minority with such western tendencies, and on the other hand to help the eastern church maintain its surveillance in this important part of the world, where Byzantinism as a whole had been identified with Slavic domination.

It is interesting to note that ecclesiastical sources state that before Rascia began its campaign against the Arbërians of the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church in general, Rascia's Zupania led by the Nemanja belonged to the Catholic rite. Stefan of Nemanja had a correspondence with Pope Innocent III calling him "*spiritual Father*".⁵³⁴

In 1217, Stefan Nemanja won the crown by Pope Innocent III, which was handed over to him by his special legate, a "Bishop of Alban".⁵³⁵

The letter that Stephen returned to the Pope states, among other things, that he "*feels like a son of the Roman church*", whereby he sends his loyalty to the Pope and swears that he "*wished to be faithful to the teachings of this holy mother*".⁵³⁶

The good relations between the Vatican and Rascia, in 1307, experienced several years of aggravation, the moment that Milutin (Stefan Uroš II) would address Pope Clement V to mediate in return for the acceptance of unity, as his brother had done, with Karl Valois, the emperor's claimant to the Western Empire, to gain some Byzantine lands and cities, which stretched across Macedonia,⁵³⁷ which, although promised by the representative of Rome, he would give up the agreement with reasoning, "*out of fear from powerful Orthodox clerics*".⁵³⁸

Despite the popular flattery of the Rascian despots with one or the other church for benefits, their ties to the Holy See were never severed even when there was some aggravation. As such they were confirmed by Stefan Dušan himself at the height of his power, when Pope Innocent V called him a representative of Christ and sought his blessing in the war against the Ottomans. Although the Orthodox Church of Nemanjaj, with the exception of Dušan, declared them all sacred and they are celebrated as such, this does not negate the fact that they have always been associated with the Catholic Church.

Reasons such as those of Stefan Uroš II that he renounced the agreements, as said, by "*fear of powerful Orthodox clerics*", have to do with some other Rascian connections with the Greek princes, by which it secured an extension to Thessaly in favor of an alliance with the Greeks and the strengthening of the axis between them to the detriment of the Bulgarians, but which was never sincere, as the Rascians changed allies accordingly, something that will also be realized by the Greeks, who will not be spared during Dušan's invasions. He will even show disregard for the Greek language and church, as well as disrespect for Byzantium in general, which he will try to take away from the throne, demanding that he do so in alliance

⁵³³ See: Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biscopija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1986, pp. 79-86.

⁵³⁴ Theimer, A: "*Monumenta Slavorum*" I, 6, no. 11.

⁵³⁵ Gjini Gasperi: "*Skopsko Prizrenska biscopija kroz stoljeća*", p. 88.

⁵³⁶ Idem, p. 88.

⁵³⁷ See Purković M: "*Avinjonske pape i srpske zemlje*", Pozarevac, 1934; Novaković St. "*Nemanjičke prestonice Ras-Pauni-Nerodimlje*", published at SANU 88 (1911), no. 14; Radonić dr Jovan: "*Vizantija i rimokatolička crkva u prvoj polovini XV veka*", Beograd, 1905.

⁵³⁸ Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 90.

with Venice and other Western powers, including the Holy See, although it persecuted its believers in the occupied lands. However, Uroš II launched a fierce campaign against the Catholics, first by banning the Latin language from liturgy and later by banning the opening of Catholic monasteries in Trepça, Novobërdo and several other places, which provided for a late agreement with the Holy See, though the cause was in the rivalry between the bishopric of Tivar and Kotor to administer the Catholic churches in the part ruled by Nemanjaj. Since Pope Inopentius III had decided in favor of Tivar in this context, Nemanjaj did not receive well this decision, as they had some conflicts with the church administrators of Tivar, so they will sabotage them, which will be reflected in their ill-treatment of Catholic believers in these parts.⁵³⁹

Arbërians (Albanians), being targeted by these measures and tied to the bishopric of Tivar were against. This is evidenced when a delegation of their nobles in the spring of 1319 sent their representatives to Pope John XXII in Avignon, informing them of the savage Slavic terror against the Catholic faithful and their church. They also asked the Pope for permission, if the Rascians did not stop the terror, to organize an uprising, which would be aided by volunteers from Catholic countries.⁵⁴⁰

This situation seems to be changing, as Pope Clement V will decide to entrust the supervision of Catholic administrations in Rascia and up to Belgrade to the church of Kotor. In 1346, Pope Clement V sent a letter to Dušan, informing him of his position on the powers of the Church of Kotor, to which Dušan answered informing him that *“what was said to him were but slanders of irresponsible missionaries, and that he intended to open more monasteries here for the Catholic faithful, whom he respected”*.⁵⁴¹

Tivar, however, will be able to restore the “lost” battle with Kotor over the primacy against the Catholics in Rascia and Dardania, during the time of Djuradj Branković, in 1456 by an agreement in which the bishop of Kotor took the title of *“Primas Regni Serviae”* (the first of the province of Serbia), i.e. ecclesiastical title, which Serbian historiography translated into state, i.e. “Serbian kingdom”.⁵⁴²

BYZANTIUM AGONY AND PRINCIPALITY OF ARBËRIA

The sudden death of Stefan Dušan on December 20, 1355, opened the last page of the Byzantine agony, which, although it would continue for a whole century, until the last castle, Constantinople, fell into the hands of the Ottomans, created great chaos in Illyricum and beyond, with a few “oases” left, such as Morea and some almost independent Arbërian and Greek despots in Epirus and Thessaly, who quickly declared their claims to independence. This chaos became even greater as neither the Palaeologans nor the Catankuzens, who “co-ruled” Byzantium for the most part by quarreling and to the detriment of the remaining part, were able to supervise it.

Even before this crisis arose, Byzantium was so devastated so that the question was who would get the last fragments of the Empire: the Ottomans or another Christian power, which would be able to hold the crown of the East?

⁵³⁹ Theimer, A: *“Monumenta Slavorum”*, I, 6, no. 12.

⁵⁴⁰ See Gasper Gjini: *“Skopsko Prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća”*, p. 90. There, among other things, details are given of the representatives of the Albanians, who were mostly from Prizren and were led by the famous nobleman Mentulus Musatius. Reportedly, the Pope had welcomed them promising them comprehensive assistance, though with the advice not to enter into any rebellion before all talks with Rascia were exhausted.

⁵⁴¹ Idem, p. 92.

⁵⁴² See: Theiner: *“Monumenta Hungariae I, 701*, and Митровић: *“Сукоб барског архиепископа и коротског епископа”*, pp. 300-302.

Since the Ottomans had already managed to conquer all the major cities of Asia Minor and by their “walks” in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic from all sides had set traps on their host, in the face of this concern, as early as August 1354, the Venetian ambassador to Constantinople informed Andrea Donaldo that the Byzantines, threatened by the Ottomans and the Genoese, were ready to submit to any power: Venice, the ruler of Rascia or even the king of Hungary.⁵⁴³

It was a state of despair that reflected the Byzantine catharsis, but also the powerlessness of the West, to change it directly.

Unable to place any central authority in most of what appeared to be remnants of the Empire, that is, in circumstances where the Ottomans were at the gates and preparing for their decisive attacks, the emergence of local “authorities” began, first of all for the powerful nobles and despots with their principalities, the empowerment of which necessarily required mutual ties or wars.

In the face of this situation, after Stefan Dušan’s death, the lands of Arbëria in Illyricum were also found, changed a lot due to three decades of invasions, and above all with a changed approach of the nobles, feudal lords and zhupans, i.e. those who had been part of the hierarchy of power, or who had run their own properties, to exploit it in accordance with their own interests as it was already clear that the Byzantine edifice on which they had relied was in its last throes, though there were contenders for her throne, who could adorn themselves with her, but by no means save her from the Ottoman swallows. This opened the race, but also the mutual war on all sides, demanding expropriation of detached or unattended parts of the Empire, which had turned into a general prey and not of any rather stable solution where something could be defended.

This tendency became even more accentuated as the last Rascian zhupan, Dušan, aimed at creating a ruling hierarchy in the various occupied parts that would be maintained by his own family (brothers, sons, sons-in-laws), in line with the Byzantine logic of holding power. By means of charts that often resembled money without cover, Dušan had appointed numerous despots and zhupans, who, in the new circumstances, continued to appear with arrogant claims as part of a valuable imperial “crown”, although the realities spoke of the opposite, that is, for a powerless one, which quickly took the direction of debauchery. Thus, after the sudden death of Dušan, as might be expected, this turned into a civil war, in which Stefan’s son, Uroš, and his brother from Stefan’s father, Simeon, were involved in carrying it in all directions. Dušan’s widow, “Empress” Helena, unable to cope with the devastation of what her husband called the “Emperor”, was unable to stop the quarrel over power left on paper in a monastery where she remained forever.

However, according to the Byzantine way, Uroš was proclaimed successor to the throne, even though he was only nineteen. He was married to Anna (1360), daughter of the Prince of Wallachia, who brother to the wife of the descendant of the Bulgarian throne, King Strazimir, which explains that he had been advised to turn to alliances with the Bulgarians in order to turn into a factor to inherit Byzantium, regardless of the size it would have.⁵⁴⁴

Stefan’s brother by his father’s side, Despot Simeon, the self-proclaimed Despot of Epirus, on Byzantine advice who continued to reckon that he might be resurrected by a connection with the Slavs, Greeks and Arbërians, hastened to proclaim himself “*Emperor of the Greeks, Rascians and all of Arbëria*” and, in accordance with this claim, called himself Simeon Uroš Paleologos, thus formally appearing as a contender for the highest throne, which had to be supported by the three main peoples of Byzantium.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ Contasmeno, G: “*Byzantinische Geisterwelt*”, Baden-Baden 1958; “*Zeitgeschichte in der Rhetorik des sterbenden Byzanz*”, 1969, p. 152.

⁵⁴⁴ Jiriček, Konstantin: “*Historia e serbëve*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 456.

⁵⁴⁵ See: Rexha, Enver: “*Historiografia serbe për Kosovën XIII-XIX*”, Prishtinë, 2009, p. 92.

Previously, he appeared in Kostur with an army of five thousand soldiers, among whom many Arbërians, who had previously been involved in Dušan's army, as mercenaries or as part of the obligation of the nobles, and zhupans, who had pledged loyalty to him, gaining property and offices. But it was at this time that Simeon Uroš Paleologos, who had declared himself "*Emperor of all Arbëria*", would realize the opposition of the Arbërians, who would inflict a defeat on his army in Epirus, after which he was forced to leave for Thessaly, while other Byzantine-Rascian officials were forced to take refuge in Janina.⁵⁴⁶

Wishing to take advantage of this situation, that is, the departure of the defeated Rascian forces from Arbëria, Despot Nikephoros II Angelos, who had landed in Thessaly and Epirus with a warship from Enos, reckoned that in these parts he would take the place of the Rascian invaders and return some of the Greek nobles from Morea. He also calculated that by means of a war campaign he would expel the Arbërian population from these parts. He even asked Simeon Uroš, the Palaeologus, who had suffered a defeat at the hands of Arbërians, to do so. But Nikephoros II Angelos, together with his Hellenic strategists and Turkish mercenaries in Ahelos (Astropotamo) suffered a heavy defeat by the Arbërian nobles, where he was killed (1358).⁵⁴⁷

Although it is said that after this defeat of Nikephoros II Angelos, Simeon temporarily restored from Kostur the rule of Rascia in the south, while in Epirus his influence remained limited by the victors over Nikephoros. Arbërians, who were real rulers in Anchialos and Arta, were on their way looking for "partnership" with other factors in these parts.⁵⁴⁸

The same will happen in the North, as in Dioclea (Zeta), one of Dušan's soldiers, Djuraš Ilić, would no longer be seen, while in 1360 the Balsha brothers will appear instead: Strazimir, Gjergj, and Balsha, who as princes, along with others in the North and South, completed parts of the mosaic of Arbërian state formations in the 14th and early 15th centuries, although they continued to remain isolated even when good opportunities for political unification emerged on the basis of a broader connection, preserving their reputation without a common policy.

The movement for secession from the temporary Rascian occupation soon turned into a dynamic action within the framework of the phenomenon of "feudal separatism",⁵⁴⁹ which in the second half of the fourteenth century characterized in particular the western part of the south-eastern Europe, as a development giving impetus to the progress and rise of the idea of "Arbëria" in an important social and political factor, although it did not succeed in completely rounding off a common state framework, as it will be interrupted by the Ottoman invasions.⁵⁵⁰

Thus, among these families, which "represented a real state nucleus, where there were royal courts, where nobles and gentry moved, with finance ministers (protovestiaris), officials (logophetes) and "deacons" - the administration led by cephalos and voyvodas",⁵⁵¹ were Balshaj in the North, Shpataj and Zenebishti in the south, Thopia in the middle parts, Muzakaj in the part of Kostur, the Gropa family in the part of Ohër and up to Dibër. The most famous representative of the Gropa family was Andrea Gropa, probably the son of Paul, whom Sufflay calls "the last Christian ruler of Ohër before the Turkish occupation", who would end up with Zaharia Gropa, who would later appear in the ranks of Skanderbeg's army.⁵⁵²

In addition to these families, at this juncture, there were several other families (those of Kastrioti and Dukagjini), who played an important role within the social and political

⁵⁴⁶ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 281.

⁵⁴⁷ For more see: *Kantakuzenos IV*, Chap. 43 – Janina Chronicle of 31st August 1358.

⁵⁴⁸ Jiriček, Konstantin: "*Historia e serbëve*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 459.

⁵⁴⁹ See: Šufflay, M: "*Povijest sjevernih Arbanasa*", Arhiv za arbanašku starinu, jezik i etnologiju II, Beograd, 1924, p. 14.

⁵⁵⁰ See Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 165.

⁵⁵¹ See: Šufflay, M: "*Histori e Shqiptarëve të veriut*", Prishtinë, 2009, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁵² See: Šufflay, M: "*Die Kirchengestände im vortürkischen Albanien*", 238-239; "*Srbi i Arbanasi*", pp. 125-126; Hopf: "*Chroniques*", 532 ("*XI Despoten et dynastes d'Épire et de Thessalie. 8 Famillie des Gropa d'Ohrida*").

spectrum of Arbëria on the eve of the Ottoman conquests. They can rightly be considered as Arbërian state formations in the 14th and 15th centuries, making Arbëria, as well as other Illyricum peoples (Tribal Rascian, Greeks, Bulgarians and Romanians) with their ethnic, social and political identity becoming part of the common mosaic with many pieces, who although as such will make it easier to the Ottomans to conquer them, in this process Arbërians entered together with their state nuclei as well as with an ethnic outer shell increasingly shaped according to its true dimensions, which in no way can be said that “Ottoman occupation and Islamization saved them from Slavism, which was greatly threatening them by the side of Orthodoxy!”

Efforts to expand these state nuclei as much as possible, even outside any common connection that characterized “feudal separatism”, began not by chance with the downfall of the Dušan’s Despotate, which included almost all of the Arbërian lands, maintaining feudal and princely autonomy. On this occasion, almost all the feudal lords, nobles and *sevasts* were set in motion, including the last offspring of Byzantium, who tried to make the best use of the new situation, although this would provoke conflicts between the large families, which by then had good family and overall relations.

Such was also Despot Nikephoros II Angelos of Epirus, who, on the way to be inevitably strengthened had to face the Arbërian nobles, appearing already as an insurmountable factor who determined the power of both the supporters or opponents of Byzantium, claiming its throne (as Dušan had been), or its overthrow for the benefit of the West. In Acarmania, his army, reinforced by Ottoman mercenaries, was badly defeated and the Byzantine despot was killed. Following this battle, the southern provinces of Epirus, Acarmania, and Aetolia were included in two new despotates. The first, based in Arta, was headed by the nobleman Pjetër Losha, while the second, based in Angielokastër (Acamania), was led by Despot Gjin Bua (Shpata) Spata.⁵⁵³

The despots of Arbëria will continue to face the remnants of Rascian rule in Epirus, Prelubevic, who demanded that these parts be returned to his conquest, which he led from Janina. Gjin Bua Shpata, after marrying Prelubevic’s sister, made some peace with the despot of Janina, but never remained calm from his intrigues. They became even bigger after Shpata’s death, when his place was taken by his son, Pal Shpata, who was unable to withstand the various pressures, to which will be added those of the Anjou and the Greeks, so he made peace with Venice, from which he retained some possessions, but lost control of the main parts, such as the castle of Lepanto on the coast and the capital, Angelokastra. The Shpata family ruled in southern Arbëria or “Northern Epirus” at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, holding Arta, Janina and Gjirokastra as “despotates”. The story of this family is marked by the glory brought by Gjin, who was one of the most powerful despots, who held the keys to Corinth, until the fall in the service of the Ottomans, as was the case with his nephew Jakub Shpata, raised and educated among the Turks, and Islamized.⁵⁵⁴

Another noble family from the South was that of the Zenebish, who owned land from Gjirokastra, Delvina, and Vagenetis (Chameria). The Zenebishi marked a rise during the time when Gjin Bua Shpata of Arta was near them, with whom they had friendly family ties, since Gjon Zenebishi was the son-in-law of the powerful despot of Arta. Like the Shpata, Zenebishi’s main opponent will be the despot of Janina, led by the Italian Esau Buondelmont (1386-1411), with whom he will have several wars. In one of them, in Dhive (Mesopotamia) the Italian will be captured by Zenebishi, who will be released against a big reward of 10 thousand pieces of gold.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ See: “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Part, Tiranë, 2002, p. 281; Jacques, Edwin: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, p. 189.

⁵⁵⁴ On Spata family see Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 162.

⁵⁵⁵ Idem, p. 285.

Since he owned the coastal part with Parga, Zenebishi would clash with Venice, which would not cease to act to remove surveillance from those parts which for the maritime republic were of great interest in keeping navigation free in these parts of its goods carried to the east and vice versa. In 1386, Venice seized Corfu, and some of the main military-economic centers of the coast, Butrint, Ksamil and Sayadha.⁵⁵⁶

Although the Sayadha saltworks will be restored, Zenebishi was unable to protect them and other coastal areas. Venice was very persistent, though there will be other circumstances, such as the Ottoman incursions and the intrigues of the Rascian despots along with the Greeks in Epirus, which in 1414 forced him to form an alliance with Venice, being guaranteed shelter for him and his family in Corfu in the event of Ottoman danger, which is what will happen be, and John will spend the rest of his life there.

As compared to the Shpataj and Zenebishi, who ended up seeking refuge with the Ottomans in Venice, two large Arbërian families, the Thopia and the Balshaj, although involved in various alliances from both East and West, will become major protagonists of developments preceding the Ottoman conquests.⁵⁵⁷

These two great families, turned the struggle to free themselves from Dušan's occupation into a war for the widest possible extension of their commitments on all sides, reaching one day reach the critical point in a civil war with each other, among the toughest in the Arbërian world at that time, which will turn into a joint loss. The Stavra War of 1385, although its epilogue, such as the loss of Balsha and his fall in that battle, will come with an intervention by the Ottomans, who will soon retreat and the "fruits" of that victory will be "enjoyed" by Thopia who will return to Durrës, with this loss directly opening the curtain on the five-century-old Ottoman occupation of the lands of Arbëria.

Thopias came on the stage sometime in the early 13th century. They were among the first to secede from Byzantium to join the Anjou of Naples.⁵⁵⁸ As a reward for recognition by the Papacy, they were conditioned of converting from the Orthodox rite to the Latin one. Thus, the door of Thopia, led by Tanush, after changing the rite, was among the first to receive the crown of the Kingdom of Arbëria that was brought to the Anjou. Tanush's son, Andrea, even though he was married to King Robert's daughter, was killed by his men, as he did not suit him.

Thopias achieved their greatest power during the time of Charles, who came to power in 1359, when the lands of Arbëria had begun to reject Dušan's occupation. Although an ally of Naples, Charles had set himself the goal of retaking Durrës, as with this city in possession, he increased his power and became a factor among the most important. The war for Durrës, Thopia faced not only Naples, but also Venice and Genoa, which could not allow to lose the city from their hands. To prevent this, Venice even ordered its own fleet to destroy the Thopia fleet at sea before it could be strengthened enough. When Thopia in 1366 broke a powerful attack by Gjergj Balsha towards Durrës, the Venetian senate declared him an honorary citizen of Venice. This did not stop him from taking Durrës, which he entered after two years. Thopias will also extend to the South, annexing the vows of the Sebastocrate Vlash Matrënga, stretching between the Shkumbin and Seman spills.

⁵⁵⁶ Idem, p. 285.

⁵⁵⁷ More on Thopia and Balsha family see: "Acta Albaniae, (by Šufflay, Jireček, Thallozcy) I, no. 333, pass-817; II, no. 18; Hopf: Chriniq, 532 ("XI. Despotes et dynastes d'Epire et de Thessalie.6.Famille des Thopia, princes d'Albanie et seigneurus de Duras) and Gelcich, Guiseppe: "Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve", Tiranë, 2009.

⁵⁵⁸ In historiography the name Thopia (*Tobbia*, *Theopia*, etc.) is often found written Topia, but based on the Greek part of the inscription in the monastery of St. John (Jovan) Vladimir (near Elbasan), it is understood that their surname was *Thopia* with *th* and the emphasis on *i*. The form Thopia is also found in an Andegaven document of 1274: *Thopia miles*. (See: Plasari, Auresl: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2010, p. 156).

This expansion caused the Muzakaj, who stretched from Kostur to Berat, to form an alliance with the Balshaj, thus entering into a direct conflict with Thopias. Thus began what appears to be the internal rise of the Arbërian princes against each other and their weakening before the foreigners, which in turn resulted in their common loss.⁵⁵⁹

Thopias were now surrounded by external and internal opponents. The Anjou will succeed in a little while, in 1372, that is, a hundred years after Charles I of Anjou had proclaimed the “Kingdom of Arbëria”, to restore the sovereignty of the Anjou in Durrës. This will not last long, as the campaign of George of Navarre, which had the blessing of Pope Gregory XI, failed to do anything but hand over to Thopia the fate of Durres, which he bought from the Anjou after two years and thus became one of the most powerful Arbërian factors.

The dominance of Karl Thopia will not last long. The Balshaj, his conspiring enemies, who owned Vlora and were connected with the Muzakaj in the South, demanded at all costs that they be the first. In 1384, Balsha II, with a surprise attack, conquered Durrës. He added to his title that of “*Duke of Durrës*”.⁵⁶⁰

The Balshaj will not have it for long. As it will be the Ottomans, led by Hayredin Pasha, who was already in Morea appearing with his army, and on September 18, 1385, at the Savra field in the Museum, crossed arms with Balsha II and his allies, whereby he scored a victory, while Balsha was killed in that battle. Durrës was left to Thopia, while the Ottomans withdrew. According to some sources, the Ottomans were called by Thopias to help restore their center, to which all those who intended to extend their power from West to East had their eyes on.⁵⁶¹

Returning to his center also had the great price of the tribute that the Ottomans had put on the Count of Durrës to pay, which he thought he could bypass if he made an alliance with Venice, or any other Western power. In this regard, he made several attempts in Venice, but remained out of the game, as the Venetians knew very well that the commitments of the Thopias in Durrës and in general in his principality, were targeted by the Ottomans, and that any account with Thopias affected the interests of the Ottomans whom they treated with caution. After Charle’s death, his son George failed to reach an agreement with Venice and following his death, the entire city would fall under Venetian rule, a matter that would remain unresolved, as in 1415 the Ottomans conquered the old capital of Arbëria and Thopia, Kruja. Balaban Bey appeared as “*Subashe of Kruja and Arbëria*”.

The princely families of the Muzakaj and the Arianites will also go through a similar rise. The Muzakaj had been known as a noble family since the time of the Komnenians, when Anna Komnena mentions the name of a nobleman from the Muzaka family (*Misachi, Misachi, Muisaičius*, etc.) who around 1090 was one of the trusted commanders of Emperor Alexios I Komnenis.⁵⁶²

The genealogy of this family is known to us from the document, “*Short memory of Don Giovanni Muzaka Despot of Epirus for his sons Don Theodor, Don Adrian and Don Constantine, their sons and their descendants, of the few he remembers in 1510.*”⁵⁶³

From 1280-1376, with some brief interruptions, a good part of New Epirus, called Myzeqe, was the feud heir of this family involved in the conflicts with the Anjou dynasty, with the Republic of Venice, and the despots of Rascia. Their possession was based in Berat and included areas on the Vjosa River, extending to Tumenisht, Selenica, Tomoruca, and a number of important towns in the Devoll, Korça and Skrapar areas.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁹ See: Edwin, Jacques: “*Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, p. 190.

⁵⁶⁰ Idem, p. 192.

⁵⁶¹ Gelcich, Guisepp: “*Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 147.

⁵⁶² See: Anna Comnena: “*Alexios*”, bot. Schopen, Vol. I, Bonn 1938, pp. 451,452.

⁵⁶³ More about the genealogy of the Muzaka family see: Pëllumb Xhufi: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 415-459.

⁵⁶⁴ See: Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 152.

In 1315 the Muzaka appeared “Catholic”, taking part in the “Crusade against the Schismatics” instigated by the papacy with the help of the king of Hungary, the Ban of Croatia (Mladen II) and the Arbërian lords.⁵⁶⁵

One of the nobles of this family, Gjon I Muzaka, stands out in support of the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*” of the Anjou.⁵⁶⁶

Andrea I Muzaka held the title of “Marshal of Arbëria”, granted by Charles II of Anjou, but he also bore the title of a Byzantine *sevastocrator*. While Andrea II Muzaka is seen at the head of an anti-Byzantine movement of 1335-1341, whereby in Durrës he will sign an agreement with the Anjou of Naples. As a vassal of the Andegavene kings of Naples, he bore the title of both “*marshal*” and “*despot*” of Arbëria”.⁵⁶⁷

After breaking the anti-Byzantine movement, many of the nobles of the Muzaka family were expropriated and forced to seek refuge in Greece, in the Peloponnese. During the Dušan’s occupation, the Muzakaj were the inspiration for the resistance against him and the Byzantine governor of the Berat and Vlora area, Despot Ivan Komnenos Asen. After the disbandment of Dušan’s Despotate, the Muzakaj expanded the boundaries of his possessions towards Korça and Devoll. In this confrontation he also dealt with the ruler Vukašin, then Despot of Dardania and all of Western Macedonia, when in 1370 he defeated his army at Kostur. This prompted the Byzantine Emperor John V Palaeologus to confirm him the title of despot. A year later, Andrea II Muzaka took over Kostur from Vukašin’s son, Kraljević Marko. His sons, John, Theodore and Stoja, will later face the Slavic invaders. But in the famous Plain of Dardana War of 1389, Theodor, at the helm of Arbërian fighters, was killed together with those who were his permanent opponents.

The last Muzaka, Theodore III, accepted Ottoman vassalage in 1417, keeping a small part of their former possessions until 1478 when Shkodra fell under Ottoman occupation. On this occasion, John Muzaka, a well-known author of the genealogy of the Muzaka family (1510), left the country and settled in the Kingdom of Naples. As expropriated, at the grand Francavilla Church in Otranto left the following epitaph: “*Almighty Jesus, this holy ark is dedicated to You by Joan Muzaka, son of Despot Gin, master of the Epirotan lands of Muzecea, whose insignia of the faith is a Byzantine eagle with two crowned heads, in the year of God 1510*”. It was the insignia of Byzantine, which the Muzakas seem to have adopted since Andrea II became Despot under Emperor Andronicus.⁵⁶⁸

The Arianiti (Arianites) family (*Aranit, Arnit, Arnith*, etc.) is likely to be associated with the well-known strategist of the Thessaloniki and then Skopje themes, patriarch David Arianiti from 1001-1018, a post granted to him by the Byzantine Emperor for his military merits in the war against the Bulgarians. His son, Constantine, is also mentioned in the years (1049-1050) as a well-known soldier in the service of Byzantium, who received the title of “*Archon of the whole West*”.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁵ Idem, p. 152.

⁵⁶⁶ See: Pëllumb Xhufi: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 415-459. Numerous sources indicate that the Muzakaj represent the typical specimen of the noble Arberian family in the Middle Ages in the circumstances when this layer was crystallizing the consciousness of independence through economic and political autonomy in relation to external and internal factors.

⁵⁶⁷ See: Plasari, Auerel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, p. 152.

⁵⁶⁸ Idem, p. 153.

⁵⁶⁹ See more on Arianites: Attaliatae: “*Historia*”, 34, 6-7; Babinger, Franz: “*Fundi i Arianitëve*”, Tiranë, 2004; Shufllaj, M: “*Serbët dhe Shqiptarët*”, 2004, pp. 48-56; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 296-299; Shuteriqi, Dh: “*Mbi disa çështje t’Arbënit*”, 197-198

This high title, as well as several other imperial titles of the time, led to the connection between the princes of Arbëria and the Arianites, hence the assessment that the “State of Arbëria” can be derived from the “State of the Arianites”.⁵⁷⁰

In 1274 Alexios Arianites of *Sebast* (*Sevast, sevasto*) is also mentioned.

The importance of the Arianiti family, as well as its power, will increase even more after connecting with the Kastrioti family, when Gjergj Arianiti’s younger brother, Vladan, marries Gjon Kastrioti’s daughter, Angjelina, that is, Skanderbeg’s sister. Gjergj married Marie Muzaka, with whom he had eight daughters. After Maria’s death, Gjergj marries Italian Despina Franco, the daughter of the governor of the city of Lecce in the Kingdom of Naples, with her sons tied to the Neapolitan royal gate, which the family’s offspring will use in various ways to protect their power.⁵⁷¹

His family remained connected with the Kastriotis even during the time of Skanderbeg and continued to remain strong even during the Ottoman period, when a nephew of Gjergj (George), according to a late 15th century document, would serve as a senior Ottoman official in the region of Vlora, which will be marked as part of the “*Arianites Arbëria*”, a name used alongside the “*Scanderbeg Arbëria*”.⁵⁷²

One of the most powerful families of Arbëria, who took advantage of Dušan’s death to rise quickly, becoming an important factor, is that of the Balshaj. The Balshaj were known to be a noble door in the North, appearing in the whirlpool of events from the mid-fourteenth century remaining as important actors for more than a century. According to some sources, the rule of the Balshaj in Zeta (Dioclea, Dukla) must have started in 1331, after Zhupan’s departure to Rascia.⁵⁷³ This shows that the strengthening of this family must have gone through the family ties he had with the despot of Rascia, with Despot Vlk, a connection that is also accepted by Gjergj Balsha II himself, who in a document of 27th of January 1386 he recalls his honorable ancestors Simeon Nemanja and Sava.⁵⁷⁴

Hopf also makes mention of these connections seeing Balshaj as a manganese of the Nemanja court since 1304, while another who later ruled Zeta was once a general in Stefan Uroš’s army, and finally, a third had been sent by Despot Stefan Uroš to govern the island of Melda in 1357.⁵⁷⁵

We see Balsha as the ruler of Zeta in 1360, who had taken control of a wider territory held until then by Ragusa, whose senate complained of these actions.⁵⁷⁶

After Balsha’s death in 1361, his sons, Strazimir, Gjergj I and Balsha II were among the first to benefit from the new situation, headed by Dioclea (Genta or Zenta) from where they will continue to the South and East. They had previously addressed the Ragusa Senate with a request for Ragusan citizenship, and the request was accepted by the Ragusa Senate because they saw in the Balshaj power a secure defender, as they did long ago from the Nemanjas, whose power after Dušan’s death had begun to disintegrate and Balshaj also benefited from this.⁵⁷⁷

Shortly afterwards, the Balsha brothers were granted citizenship by Venice, although they feared further expansion of the power they were gaining in coastal areas, where the interests

⁵⁷⁰ More about the connection between the “State of Arbni” and the Arianites see Dh. Shuteriqi: “*Mbi disa çështje t’Arbënit*”, 197-198; Hopf: “*Chroniques*”, 535 (XI. Despotēs et dynastes d’Epire et de Thessalie. 13. Famille des Arianiti-Comnenes); “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 296-298.

⁵⁷¹ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 298.

⁵⁷² Idem, p. 298.

⁵⁷³ See: Gelcich, Giuseppe: “*Zeta dhe Dinastija e Balshajve*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 31; Ljubić, K: “*Pregled Povjeti*”, Fiume 1864; Orbin “*Istoria del Regno degli Slavi*”, Pesaro, 1601; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 301-305; Plasari, Aurel: „*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, p. 147.

⁵⁷⁴ See: Mikloschić: “*Monumenta Serbica*”, Wien, 1858, p. 203.

⁵⁷⁵ Hopf: “*Geschichte Griechenlands in Mittelalter*”, Berlin, 1912.

⁵⁷⁶ See at Gelcich: “*Monumenta Ragusina – Reformationes. III*”, p. 67.

⁵⁷⁷ Idem, p. 32.

of the senate could be jeopardized. Thus, they tried to prevent the Balshaj from gaining power by inciting Despot Uroš of Rascia and Voynov of Slavonia.⁵⁷⁸

On this journey they could not be stopped by neither Uroš of Rascia whose power was being shrunk by the Arbërian princes freed from the Nemanjić yoke, nor the Venetian behind the scenes games, having a great influence in appropriating a good portion of the possessions over the Arbërian lands even in alliances with the Ottomans and others that will appear shortly. Thus, they took Ulqin, Tivar, and then returned to Shkodra and the Shirgji pier. In 1367, they took over Budva, overseeing trade movements across the Adriatic and thus emerging as one of the most important factors of the time.⁵⁷⁹

Their power as regional factors, which was not only at the sea, but also land, especially the old imperial roads “Via Egnatia” passing and others connecting the coast with Dardania and with the East, Balshaj proved by their penetrations through the Drin valley, heading to Dukagjin and Dardania (Prizren), which was held occupied by Uroš, in order to go further east.

The extension and penetration to the South, which mainly had to go through the possessions of the Dukagjinis, Zahariaj and Thopia, granting his principality dimensions of a strong state, among the strongest of the time, as a new factor between East and West, confronted Balsha with the noble Arbërian families, who were also trying to regain their possessions that had been conquered by Dušan or Byzantines in Epirus and Thessaly. Durrës and Vlora, but also Berat, were some of the points that Balshaj would mark in order to necessarily take them, with alliances - as happened with Muzakaj, or through wars - as will happen with Thopias of Durrës.

The battle for Durrës with Thopias will be one of the heaviest in terms of the consequences that the Arbërian lands experienced, as it turned out that in those very decisive circumstances, princely claims and ambitions took precedence over the concept of forming a common connection of the princes of Arbëria, which not only lacked but were unlikely to appear in the face of circumstances as they, each in his own way, were fighting for as much power and space as possible, which could only be achieved at the expense of each other and by no means otherwise.

Balsha's determination to increase his commitment on all sides, even with a strong hand, aroused the curiosity of his neighbors, especially Venice. The Adriatic fox was interested in a force that would free the disintegrating space of Dušan's Despotate from a turbulent situation with many zhupans and unpredictable princes, though not for a very powerful prince who would dictate conditions to him, as would soon be the case with Balsha, who after accepting Catholicism and having a direct connection with the Vatican granted by Pope Urban V, became an important Western factor beyond the Adriatic.

It was not only the military that made Balsha powerful in these parts. It was also its ecclesiastical power, on the Vatican side, that turned it into a double competitor: to the Slavic lands and to the Orthodox Church, although this made it a target for the Ottomans, as happened in the battle of Stavra in 1385, which were waiting for a prelude to their preparation to enter these parts as everyone would weaken, but without anyone in that internal struggle with each other who would appear on a rise too high above the others.

In fact, the Battle of Stavra and its tragic end for Balsha II, which was directly influenced by the participation of Ottoman forces led by Hayredin Pasha, who were called as help by Thopia, warned of a general tragedy that would be not long coming for everyone, four years later in the Battle of the Dardana Plain of June 1389, in which, along with other Arbërian and Illyricum leaders, also participated George (Gjergj) II Balsha. Three years later, in a pursuit

⁵⁷⁸ See: Gelcich Giuseppe: *Zeta dhe Dibastia e Balshajve*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 41; *“Historia e Popullit Shqiptar”*, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 301.

⁵⁷⁹ Gelcich, Giuseppe: *“Zeta dhe Dinastia e Balshajve”*, Tiranë, 2009, p. 41.

with Ottoman forces, George II Balsha is seen to have been captured by the Ottomans, who gave up Shkodra to be released.⁵⁸⁰

After these losses, George II Strazimir (1385-1403), faced with the realities, tried to save as much as possible of the former possessions, not through war, but rather through alliances, in the first place with the Venetians, including attempts to connect with the Hungarians as well, even though they were opponents of Venice. The connection with Venice provided protection for George II, as he would give up many of the benefits of the Adriatic Republic, accepted by Venetian nobility and the Grand Council of the Republic - especially after getting rid of his rivals from the door of the Crnojevics (one of whom Djuraš h in April 1396, during a punitive campaign, he will kill) - but it never turn into permanent protection. Because, his relentless opponents, from the Dukagjinis, Ionians, and Zahariaj, as well as Prince Vuk Lazarević, had turned into vassals of Sultan Bayezid I and threatened him greatly from all sides.⁵⁸¹

However, George II, aware of the circumstances and realities, tried, despite the “protection” from Venice, to maintain ties with Ragusa and Hungary, both opponents of Venice. Their help was rather moral, and although they continued to call him “*Princeps Albaniae*”, it did him no good. He died alone in 1403 in his hometown of Ulqin.

Against such circumstances, George II’s son, Balsha III (1403-1424), after turning his eyes to Hungary and at the same time was giving signs to the Ottomans that he could be useful to them if they did not prevent him returning Shkodra and Drishti from Venice, which happened in 1405. It was a dangerous adventure in which the young Balsha dashed into (it will last over fifteen years), in which there will be mutual attacks and counterattacks, some peace agreements, not respected by Venice, so that it all ends with an expected defeat of Balsha III. In April 1421 during an attack on Kotor when the Ottomans came to the aid of the Venetians with whom they had made an agreement, once and for all, this powerful door will come down from the historical stage, not as a vassal, as will happen with most of the rest, but as losers, who had it predetermined by a power which was among the most refined to turn diplomacy and political cunning always in its favor. Desperate, a few months later, the last Balshaj heir died (April 26, 1421).⁵⁸²

With this, the chapter of one of the most important and powerful despots of the Arbërian state-forming mosaic in the Middle Ages was closed, which continued with others, always through family epicenters, i.e. large families, which in the Albanian case, like with other peoples, especially during the Middle Ages, provided their ethnicity with a sense of unity, which ensured historical continuity.⁵⁸³

In this historical development of an unstoppable factorization of the Arbërian principalities emerging from the family epicenters and their continuity, there were also two Arbërian families: the Dukagjini and the Kastriotis. They played a special role in the developments that would precede the Ottoman conquests, as they became the bearers of what is seen as part of a certain Arbërian social and spiritual identity, which stems from a historical consciousness related to antiquity, which had to be supported.

Thus, the Dukagjini highlighted an awareness of the law as part of an internal social and institutional rule, which would have to protect Arbërian society from external laws, such as the Ottoman, related to a different civilization from the one they had. While the Kastriotis pointed out the state institution and the behavior in accordance with it, which, although it will appear in the circumstances of vassalage, it was necessary that Arbërians, as well as others

⁵⁸⁰ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 305.

⁵⁸¹ Gelcich, Giuseppe: “*Zeta dhe Dinastia e Balshajve*”, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 76-79.

⁵⁸² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 306.

⁵⁸³ More about family epicenters and their role in ensuring historical continuity see M. Šufflay: “*Histori e Shqiptarëve të Veriut*”, Prishtinë, 2009, pp. 32-37; “*Povjest sjevernih Arbanasa*”, Arhiv za arbanašku starinu, jezik i etimologiju, Beograd, 1924, pp. 43-51; Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, pp. 164-167.

(Slavs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Romanians), succumb to this logic in a near-century-long transition, to deposit consciousness for the state, even as vassals, no matter how and how much it would be worth in the new circumstances.

In this historic mission, these families, who, along with others, will be involved in well-known developments, such as those emerging from the time of the fall of the invading Despotate of Dušan to the direct confrontation with the Ottoman invaders, had an opportunity to behave in accordance with this awareness, appearing geographically in a connecting node between the coastal and central parts with that of Dardania and Macedonia.

Since Dardania and Macedonia, especially the part of Epirus, had always represented a nucleus of a common social and political entity on which the Byzantine Empire had relied for centuries, it was natural for these parts to become targeted by both beneficiaries and destroyers of Byzantines: Bulgarians and Slavs from the 10th century onwards. Their social and political formations, first the Kingdom of Bulgaria and then the Zhupans of Rascia, from the first Stefan Nemanja to the “Megazhupan” Stefan Dušan, who, after penetrating from the western part (Bosnia and Zahlumia), where they had their formation nucleus, will mostly act at the expense of Byzantium and to the detriment of the state-forming peoples, primarily the Arbërians.

The Bulgarian conquests came to light from the time of Boris of Bulgaria from the second half of the ninth century and later Simeon when they conquered part of Dardania and southern Illyricum. While the invasions of the Rascians against the Arbërians appeared with great severity after the Fourth Crusade and onwards, together with the campaigns of the West turning against Byzantium. Therefore, it was quite natural for the Arbërian space to be attacked from the North and East by both the Bulgarians and later Rascians, because from there the foundations of Byzantium, erected by the time of the emperor Constantine the Great and Justinian, although they as pagans were brought in by Emperor Heracles to protect it.

This behavior, which started with the Bulgarian invasions of the 9th-10th centuries and partly in the 13th century and continuing with the Nemanjaj of Rascia, tolerated by the Greekized Byzantium, will see the Bulgarians and Slavs as enemies but also as possible saviors, will severely damage their social and spiritual structures, by which, from the 2nd century onwards, the Illyrian-Dardanians, enjoying the status of Roman and then Byzantine (*Romaïos*) citizenship, were committed to the Empire and its values which already identified them. Moreover, Byzantium, in accordance with this account, which will mostly be turned into a boomerang, allowed the destruction of the traditional *izopolitias* relations in these parts, a model of the autonomous governance partnership (*foedus*), inherited from Roman times. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the Kingdom of Bulgaria, in Simeon’s time, moved its administrative and ecclesiastical center to the occupied parts of Dardania and Macedonia (Ohër). Also, it was no coincidence that Nemanjaj (from Stefani, in 1191, to the last, Dušan, in 1335), from time to time, moved their administrative and ecclesiastical center in these parts (Prizren and Scupi).⁵⁸⁴

Since the former zhupan of Dušan, Balsha, managed in a short time and without any great effort to remove Dušan’s occupation (Ulqin, Tivar and Budva, and Shkodra) and from there expand his northern principality in the direction of Durres and Vlora in the South and at the same time the Drin Valley to penetrate to Prizren, the penetrations to Dardania led to the possessions of the Dukagjini family. It is known that the Dukagjini allowed the troops of Balsha to pass through the only road leading there, but outside subjugation.⁵⁸⁵

However, after the fall of Balsha in the battle of Stavra, when in fact the decline of its possessions began, the Dukagjini emerge as landowners from Lezha holding the possessions on both sides of the Drin valley to Prizren. Also, the Dukagjini supervised the Dukagjini plain

⁵⁸⁴ See: K. Jireček: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, First Part, Tiranë, 2010, pp. 306-309.

⁵⁸⁵ See: Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 23-44.

from Prizren to Peja. They, through their son-in-law Kojë Zaharisa, who oversaw the part of Deja, were directly connected to the western part of Dardania, which connected it with Shkodra and Durrës.⁵⁸⁶

Although after the temporary overflow of the Ottomans in the northern and middle parts, occupying in 1393, for a short time, Kruja, Ulqin, Shkodra and Deja, the Dukagjini handed over Lezha to the Venetians, and with this temporarily lost control of the Lezha-Prizren road, the Dukagjini, in addition to the connection of the areas of Arbëria (Prizren and Peja), with the northern ones and the coast (Shkodra and Lezha), which for a long time had been held under occupation by Rascia of Nemanja and Dušan, rising to the level of a key principality, had spread the Kanun, an act of legislation that would keep united from a spiritual, social and political point of view, most among the Arbërians. The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini, or as it is also called the Kanun of the Mountains, remains almost the only legal act regulating the internal life of the Arbërians in an authentic way even in the circumstances of the Ottoman occupation.⁵⁸⁷

The Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini, as a legal and moral institution, as an internal constitution binding for the majority of Arbërians, was not something random, much less did it have to do with Dušan's "Zakonik", which is often said to have been an offspring of the "Megazupan" mentality on law and order, which he had allegedly left to the Arbërians and the like. It is, however, a continuation of Justinian's famous Codex, from the sixth century, when he would be able to codify the laws and norms by which the Illyrian-Dardanian society had been self-governing since antiquity. This code has continued to be used in Arbëria since the first Bulgarian invasions, hence the fall of the imperial legal system which was the product of their social awareness of the law codified by their Emperor, Justinian I, to continue for a long time during the Slavic conquests from the 13th century onwards.⁵⁸⁸

Therefore, from this point of view, Dušan, as well as Nemanjaj in general, since their emergence as invaders in Dardania from the end of the 12th century onwards after coming in contact with Arbërians, did not bring "rules and laws" as stated mostly, because they never had them, but they rather took them from Arbërians, who had their Kanun long before, by which they organized their internal life even before Justinian, from what it was quite natural for them to support the well-known imperial code. Even certain legal forms of "Zakonik" (the issue of property, family, revenge and others), if we look at it more carefully, come out as borrowed from the Kanun of Arbërians, which reveals the truth that a part of Serbian historiography admits that there was no Dušan's "Zakonik", except for the pieces that were collected (invented) in later centuries when the "Serbian medieval state", in addition to the conversion of the Triballi in Serbia, had to create "legal platforms".⁵⁸⁹ .. They will gradually acquire these forms, while their proclamation by Dušan represents nothing but an adaptation of some articles of the Kanun of Arbërians, which will then be added to some of the repressive and discriminatory nature towards others (especially the *Arbanasi*, as they are called, and the Vlachs).

After all, if Dušan's "Zakonik" were the "original" social and spiritual code of the Slavs of an "imperial" level, as claimed, while the Dukagjini Kanun an imitation, then why would it not remain in use to the Slavs even during the Ottoman conquests, as would be the case in

⁵⁸⁶ Jireček, Konstantin: "*Historia e Serbëve*", Second Part, Tiranë, 2010, p. 59.

⁵⁸⁷ For more see "*Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*", included in the set of complete "Works" I, of Shtjefën Gjeçovi - Kryeziu, Prishtinë, 1985.

⁵⁸⁸ See Patër Gjergj Fishta's introduction to "*Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*", Tiranë, pp. XXVI-XXVII; Konitza, Faik: "*Ca kujtime mbi At Gjeçovin*", at "*Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*", p. XXXIII.

⁵⁸⁹ About the invention of Dushan's "Zakonik" in the 19th century, as well as the numerous forgeries to create a "platform" for him, although it is accepted that there is no original, except for "its detached parts", which "reconstruct its whole", more widely see: Novaković, Stojan: "*Zakonik Stefana Dušana, cara srpskog 1349-1345*", Beograd, 1898, p. LIX.

Arbëria, when it, through the *Buyukbas* system, would be accepted by the Ottomans as the basis regulating the centuries-old self-government of over half of its population?⁵⁹⁰

Thus, it can be said that the Kanun among the Arbërians, with variants of Labëria, that of Skanderbeg, Morea, Dukagjini, Mirdita, etc., and also in the form Justinian I codified it in the 6th century, was part of a legal internal institution of their ancestors, the Pelasgians, whose forms, such as the Council of Elders, behavior during the war, property regulation and numerous other issues we find described in Homer's "*Iliad*", which von Hahn relates to an institution of law among the oldest of antiquity. The German scholar provides plenty of examples of the spread of many moral and legal norms not only among the descendants of the Pelasgians, but also among other peoples: Germans and the Balto-Slavs.⁵⁹¹

On this occasion, it is stated that the "*Council of Elders*", as it has acted in most of the lands of Arbëria, whenever decisions were taken, such as those related to criminal matters, property, or even family issues, so the way of sanctioning these issues and their implementation, is very similar to that of Ancient Rome, where the Senate proposes laws and approves them by representatives, who, in this case, come from the tribes, as well-known forms of organization since antiquity.⁵⁹²

From this point of view, another princely family, that of the Kastrioti, represents a very important reference between the social consciousness of the Arbërians for the internal regulation through institutional law, such as the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini and the awareness of the common state. As the time of the rise of the Kastrioti family (Gjon) is related to the weakening of two large families: Thopia and Balshaj, its social and political position was important. It linked two of the main goals of the Arbërian nobility in those circumstances: on the one hand, the immediate liberation from the influence of Rascia, which, even after Dušan's death, was on the verge of disintegration, and its heirs continued to try to prevent the social and political connection of the Arbërian principalities and, on the other hand, the creation of circumstances for a rapprochement with the western countries to withstand the Ottoman invasions, which had already affected the Arbërian lands from many directions.

As for the first issue, namely the liberation from the Triballian Rascia, the Kastrioti also continued the path that Balsha and other nobles had followed. Many sources indicate that the Kastriotis will extend in the direction of Dardania (as far as Prizren and Skopje), though it may not be said for sure as to what exactly their possessions in these parts, since the Brankovićs (in many medieval documents, as well as Nemanjaj of Rascia of Triballian origin),⁵⁹³ who appeared as owners of a part of this territory (parts between Prizren and Skopje) accepting vassal relations with the Ottomans, which could not be touched, except for the owner of certain parts allowed within the framework of free possessions.⁵⁹⁴

However, more than power over those parts, nevertheless lacking clear historical evidence as being "part of Kastrioti's state" in which case, even his family genealogy is attributed to him from this part (Has),⁵⁹⁵ one may speak of economic presence in this part,

⁵⁹⁰ About the self-government of the Albanians on the basis of the Kanun during the Ottoman Empire as well as the wide extension from the north to the Morea as well as the local structures, see: Novaković, Stojan: "*Tursko carstvo pred srpski ustanak 1780-1804*", Beograd, 1906, pp. 162-188.

⁵⁹¹ For more see: J. G von Hahn: "*Studimet shqiptare*", Tiranë, pp. 235-249.

⁵⁹² Idem, 277.

⁵⁹³ To the Byzantine chroniclers of the fourteenth century: Chalkonkondil, Christobulos, Dakos, and others, call the Nemanjas and the population included in the despot of Rascia Triballi. The despots Brankovic and Lazarevic are also called Triballi. See at Nikolić, Maja: "*The Byzantine Writers on Serbia 1402-1439*", Beograd, 2010, pp. 30,32,34 and 66. The historian Skender Rizaj also views the Nemanjaj of Rascia and in general the medieval population of the central part of the Illyrian Gashulli as Triballi.

⁵⁹⁴ See "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", First Volume, Tiranë 2002, pp. 316-318.

⁵⁹⁵ More about the Kastriot genealogy related to Has see: Blanchus: "*Geirgios Castriotos*", p. 70. The view of F. Bardhi (F. Blanchus) has been presented and supported by Noli in the study on Skanderbeg, then Buda and Biçoku ("*Nga ishin Kastriotët?*"), though with reservations by Frashëri, Kristo: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2002; Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu – një histori politike*", Tiranë, 2010 and Schmitt, Oliver Jens: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë.

through trade and other actions it had with some Ragusan and Venetian merchants in these parts.

However, it is noteworthy that Gjon Kastrioti had managed to exceed the narrow limits and behave in accordance with the appearance of an important nobleman, who took care of respecting the churches, which reflected his social and political reputation necessary to nurture and preserve genuine Christian identity even when, under the circumstances of the invasions, such as those threatening, other mechanisms may cease to function. Thus, in addition to his connections with Venice and the Catholic Church, he will be attentive to the Orthodox Church, which he belonged to as the majority of the feudal lords of that part, whereupon its center in Hilandar on the Holy Mountain donated in 1426 two of his villages from the part of Gostivar. There he also bought the St. Gin's Pyrgus (also known as Arbërian Pyrgos - *arbanaški pirg*), where one of his sons and Reposh stayed, the latter spending his life as a monk till he passed away on July 25, 1431.⁵⁹⁶

Notably, Gjon Kastrioti's possessions were clearly defined precisely after he accepted vassalage from the sultan. Even after Kruja fell to the Ottomans, Kastrioti showed restraint so that his relations with the Ottomans would not be cause him lose power. At the moment he made several ties with Venice and Ragusa, in keeping the links open with this part of the world, that provided some routes for movement of goods through the northern routes from Shkodra to Prizren and Scupi. Here he tried to keep his balance to the end, although it was very hard, especially as he could not decide beforehand on the fate of alliances with the big ones (Ottomans and Venetians), though they would settle accounts with each other at his expense.⁵⁹⁷

Under such circumstances, it can be said that Gjon Kastrioti managed to create a princely structure, which, even as a sultan's vassal, was equated with those similar that the Slav-Orthodox, Bulgarians, Greeks and others had.⁵⁹⁸

PART THREE

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

CHAPTER ONE

OTTOMANS AND BYZANTIUM

EMERGENCE OF OTTOMANS IN ILLYRICUM

⁵⁹⁶ About the gifts of the Kastrioti family to Hilandar see: Barleti, Marin: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 1964; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", I, Tiranë, 2002; Frashëri, Kristo: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2002; Plasari, Auerel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010.

⁵⁹⁷ Frashëri, Kristo: "*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2002, pp. 5-20.

⁵⁹⁸ Idem.

Three dates are important in explaining the progress of the Ottoman conquests in the European part and their historical direction, establishing certain preconditions for understanding one of the most important historical events for Europe, but also for Western civilization in general. These are the following: the year 1354, 1371 and 1389. While, for Arbërians, in addition to these, the year 1385, has a special meaning, as the battle of Savra related to this date, as well as the circumstances in which it will take place it (the Ottoman war against the Balshaj and some other Arbërian feudal lords near Durrës as well as the “riddle” of the Topia being on the side of the Ottomans), reflect the state of occurrence on various fronts, which was often repeated by the division of the cross and hence to which a heavy tribute was paid.

The year 1354 represents the time when the Ottomans, after the conquest of Bursa in 1326, crossed the Dardanelles and jumped into the Illyricum Peninsula, from where in 1361 they took Adrianople, which they will call Edirne declaring it their capital. To achieve this, Osman I commissioned his son, Orhan, to enter Byzantium. Thus, Sultan Orhan, after conquering Bursa and forcing the Byzantine Empire to become an ally, whereby Kantakouzene had to marry his daughter, Theodora Paleologos-Kantakouzene from the door of the Palaeologos, a marriage that according to Ottoman sources took place in 1346.⁵⁹⁹

That with this marriage the Byzantine Emperor also had accounts to settle with the Ottomans, continuing with other mutual agreements, this was more than clear. Since with the help of Orhan, Kantakouzene had entered Constantinople on February 2, 1347 proclaiming himself emperor, as a counter award for Orhan he would be given the city of Cermen (Çime) in Gallipoli, while Orhan would respond by sending Turkish troops to help his son Joan V, Matheu Kantakouzene in 1357 against the Bulgarians. So, with this alliance with the Ottomans, which in a way will gradually turn Byzantium into a vassal of the Ottomans, their use began in settling accounts with internal and external opponents (the West).⁶⁰⁰

This “experience” will be embraced by others, especially the Slavs, Bulgarians, but also Arbërians, who will reach agreements and alliances with the Ottomans, from time to time, to fight each other, although all of them were being facilitated on the road to new invasions in Europe.⁶⁰¹

The Byzantine accounts with the Ottomans continued even after Orhan’s death (1362), with his son Murat I. Although initially troubled by an uprising in Anatolia, he continued his careful penetration southeast of the European continent, this time conquering good parts of south of Bulgaria and Thrace, crowning it with the conquest of Philippopolis. This will not protect much the insecure Emperor with the few parts of possessions left, which, as has been seen, will force his opponents to turn to the Ottoman card.

However, what is important to note on this occasion is that the first Byzantine-Ottoman alliance, and also the previous agreements with the Seljuks in the eastern parts, will become part of that “experience” that will be accepted by the Eastern church and Slavic peoples of the

⁵⁹⁹ Of the Ottoman sources see: “*Düstur-name-i Enveri*”, 67; “*Annali musulmani*”, X, anno 1348, and Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 185.

⁶⁰⁰ Although in Asia Minor there was a time when Byzantium was losing wars with the Seljuk Turk formations and they were coming and approaching the Bosphorus from where they would be thrown to the southern parts of the continent, it is noted that the Holy See and western countries had no longer given up the fight against “veresies” within Christianity. This is best understood from the letter of John XXII (1316-1334), Pope Boniface VIII (1295-1303) had entrusted to the Franciscans the Inquisition in Rascia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Bosnia, etc., adding the Archdiocese of Durrës. Because, in that Archdiocese, “heresy” still remained to be fought. (See: Farlati: *Illyricum Sacrum*, IV, 58 (ASVAT); *Codex diplomaticus*, IX, 349; *Acta Bosnae*, 22 and *Acta Albaniae*, I, no.724).

⁶⁰¹ The practice of calling on the help of Turkish mercenaries will be continued by Stefan Dushan in the war against the Empire, and also by the Bulgarians against the Hungarians and Vlachs, and from the despot of Epirus against the Byzantines. And so on, other Christian lords in the region sought “outside” help in the quarrels between them, actions that Jorga has called “*crimes against religion and race*”. (See at Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 185)

Orthodox rite that in the war against the western church and the West in general, will use the help of the Ottomans and even Islam. This will be another chapter of the internal divisions of the Christians, which will facilitate the way of the Ottoman conquests towards the old continent, a part of which will fall under their centuries-old rule.

The year 1371 represents another important stage for the Ottoman penetration of the Illyricum Peninsula (called the Balkan Peninsula in the 19th century) and their further expansion into the European part, because, after the conquest of Adrianople, the Ottomans conquered other parts of Thrace by which the scattered despots of southern Europe (Rascians and Bulgarians, especially the first already claiming the crown of Byzantium), for the first time feel seriously threatened by the suspicion that the Ottomans were there, on one side because it could be part of the emperor's contacts of Kantakouzene, already in a relationship with the Sultan, to eliminate his opponents and, on the other hand, because even the Christian European countries until then had shown more will and commitment to use them as a preventive "dam" against the Ottomans, rather than get involved themselves in any alliance of European dimensions that would pave the way for the Ottoman conquests.

On the contrary, it is noteworthy that at a time when some of the feudal lords and Christian despots of Central Illyricum were trying to take action against the Ottomans (the one in Maritsa), we also have the first Western agreements with the Ottomans, which will give them time for other invasions achieving certain strategic favors in relation to the West itself, since the agreements with them were nothing but cunning actions against each other even under the call of "unity against the Ottomans". Such was the "trade treaty" concluded by the City of Ragusa in 1365 with Murat I for the protection of trade against a tribute of 500 ducats, which the Republic offered to the sultan himself, which will make Murat I the first of the Ottoman leaders to enter into a relationship with a Western European state.⁶⁰²

In the face of these cunning actions of the Westerners, the Byzantines openly opposed the Ottoman card. In 1362, Emperor Joan V Palaeologus (1354-1376), concluded a treaty with Murat I through which he recognized and confirmed the Turkish conquests at the expense of the Byzantine Empire in south-eastern Europe, where he vowed not to associate with the enemies of the Ottomans, supporting them with his troops, even going to war for the sultan himself, and giving one of his sons as a hostage.⁶⁰³

This treaty is considered significant in history not only for the fall of the Byzantine Empire under the Turks, but also for the recognition of their presence on the European continent.⁶⁰⁴

Despite this, however, the efforts of the Byzantines to include the Catholic countries in the war, which were still focused on keeping this burden on the Balkans, after having accepted vassalage, some for their own accounts and some out of fear of Ottoman power, did not show any devotion to any direct war with the Ottomans. That the Byzantine emperor intended an open war between the Catholics and the Ottomans is understood by some covert actions, such as when John V himself went to Hungary to King Ludovic the Great to seek war against the Turks.⁶⁰⁵

It is very likely that the actions to be taken by King Ludwig through Amadeus VI known as the "Green Count" of Sevisa, in which case Gallipoli would be taken from the Turks and returned to the Byzantines (1366), were part of the tactics of John V, who is said to have

⁶⁰² See Hammer, J von : "*Histoire de l'Empire Ottomane depuis son origine jusque' a nos jours par J.de Hammer*", Vol. III-III Paris /Londres/Sant-Petersbourg 1835-1836 , I, 230-231; Miltitz: *Manuel des consuls*, II, 166. Ragusa will renew this treaty in 1408 with Suleiman and the same treaty was renewed in 1414 with Sultan Mehmed I. (See: Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 192).

⁶⁰³ See Hammer, J von: "*Histoire*, I, 225 and 404 and *Annali musulmani*, X, anno 1346.

⁶⁰⁴ See Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010, p. 192.

⁶⁰⁵ Idem, p. 193.

gathered as many warriors against the Ottomans as possible, before Pope Urban V denied “schism” and accepted the “Catholic faith”.

This submission, as will be seen, will not be of much use to them, as Western countries no longer believed in the imperial crown, that it could do anything, as they were not willing to engage in direct warfare with the Ottomans.⁶⁰⁶

The West’s reasonable disbelief in the Byzantine emperor’s willingness to take part in the war against the Ottomans, however, compelled them, if they themselves were not to take part in that war, at least to undertake the organization of an alliance which would be granted to them in order to cut off the Ottomans before it was too late. It was Hungary that went in search of it. King Ludovic managed to include the Bosnian Ban, Uroš of Rascia, Voyvoda of Wallachia, and others with which Hungary had good relations. Invitation to participate in this alliance, Pope Urban V had also made to the provinces “of Tivar, Durres and Patras”.⁶⁰⁷

Evidently, the army of Christians, commanded by King Ludovic of Hungary, had descended to Adrianople occupied by the Ottomans. In this battle, the beylerbey of Rumelia, Lale Sahin, badly defeated the Christians.⁶⁰⁸

After this defeat the Ottomans increased their combat operations on almost all sides and their conquests increasingly threatened the central part of the peninsula. In the face of there is another Christian alliance of the region between King Sisman of Bulgaria, Despot Uglesa of Seres, Prince Vukašin of Rascia, Prince Kostadin of Velbuzh (Kostendil) and a contingent of Byzantine troops. It was the same Lale Sahin who blocked the way for Christian troops in Samokovo and dispersed them, while Prince Kostadin surrendered to Murat.⁶⁰⁹

Despite a disruption, on September 26 of that year (1371), the second battle took place near the river Maritsa, in Kermiano between the Christians of Illyricum, who were joined by Alexander of Vlora, and the Ottomans commanded by Lale Sahin. Even in this battle, the Christians of Illyricum, mainly Orthodox, suffered heavy losses. Despot Uglesa and Prince Vukašin fell in the war. This resulted in the conquest of the despotate of Seres and Wallachia, as well as the acceptance of Ottoman vassalage by the Rascian, Bulgarian and other despots.⁶¹⁰

Rascian Despot Lazar Grebljanović (Stefan Dušan’s illegitimate son) accepted vassalage at the cost of a double tribute to both the Ottomans and Byzantium.⁶¹¹

The “double” tribute represents a situation that can only be understood if the reality of Byzantium created after 1361 by the agreements between Byzantium and Sultan Murat I, according to which the Empire’s subordinates (thought to be the Illyrian despots), is taken into account, regardless of the degree of autonomy in relation to the central government, in the new vassal relations with the Ottomans they were obliged to pay a part of the tribute to Byzantium as well.

This practice continued well until 1453 when Constantinople fell to the Ottomans and was intended to pass the system of subordination (vassalage) through the pyramid of interdependence that in those circumstances suited the Ottomans as a convenient means of

⁶⁰⁶ More on the journey of Joan V in the West see: Norden “*Das Papstum und Byzanz. Die Trennung der beide Mächte und das Problem ihrer Wiedervereinigung bis zum Untergang des byzantinischen Reiches 1453*”, Berlin, 1903. 708; Vasiliev: “*Il viaggio dell’ Imperatore*”; *Anali musulmani*, X, anno 1369.

⁶⁰⁷ See *Acta Albaniae*, II, no.198.

⁶⁰⁸ On this battle, according to Plasari, Aurel “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 194, from Ottoman sources see: Raiss Efendi: “*Annali degli osmanidi*”, 10, and the sources see: Pray: “*Annales Rerum Hungariae*”, II, 126.

⁶⁰⁹ See: Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 194.

⁶¹⁰ More about the Ottoman Empire, its rise and their conquests in European and southeastern Europe see: Gibbons, H. A: “*The Foundations of the Ottoman Empire*”, Oxford, 1916; Hammer, P Joseph von: “*Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*”, 1840; Jireček, K: “*Gesschihte der Bulgaren*”, Sofia; Inhalxhik, Halil: “*Perandoria osmane*”, Tiranë, 2010; Imber, C: “*The Ottoman Empire 1300-1481*”, Istanbul, 1990; Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002; Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010; Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, 2013; Schmitt, Oliver Jens: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë.

⁶¹¹ See Hammer, Joseph von: “*Histoire*, I, 242 and 409.

passing “naturally” to the final act of occupation, which, however, will need a final battle (of Dardana Plain) a few years later, inevitable for the very fact that it ended one stage - that of gaining the historic log of the clash of Christianity over the centuries (the Holy See and Constantinople), in which case the way was opened for the next stage, that of their conquests in the center of Europe as an ultimate goal of the Ottomans.

BEGINNINGS OF OTTOMAN SOVEREIGNTY IN ARBËRIA

Before going back to 1389 and the battle of Dardania Plain (mythicalized in the 19th century and mostly interpreted in accordance with the falsifications of the great-Serbian historiography), when the united princes of Illyricum (Arbërians, Rascians, Bosnians and Bulgarians, supported also by Hungarians, Polish and other Christian volunteers), together they will lose that decisive battle that will pave the way for the five-century-old Ottoman occupation, the year 1385, which for Arbërians and Arbëria, will be fatal. On the Plain of Savra, in Myzeqea, where Timurtas Pasha will appear and there he will take Balsha’s head, the main princes of Arbëria (namely Thopina of Durrës and Balsha), did not stick together. For quite some time they fought against each other and this battle had to determine the “first” among them.

Despite this “confusion” the epilogue of which will be sealed by the Ottomans, it has been assessed that this chapter opens the beginnings of Ottoman sovereignty in Arbëria.⁶¹²

Although this battle has been described occasionally as a preliminary part of the Ottoman campaign in the lands of Arbëria,⁶¹³ starting with a well-known strategy of taking it with caution, where the Arbërian feudal lords will be used against each other,⁶¹⁴ while elsewhere it is seen only as an open war between two Arbërian princes for complete domination, which had erupted from the time of Dušan’s death, as war for the return of the lands he had conquered and other Byzantine lordless lands had ignited from all sides, in which the Ottomans were “almost involved” as they were called for help,⁶¹⁵ this war reflects a fierce battle between Balsha and Thopia over the “primate” for Arbëria. Therefore, it should also be seen as a strategy of the Ottomans to exploit the rivalry between the feudal lords and the Arbërian princes, so that from there by the Adriatic, in the south of Europe, approach them as soon as possible, at a point where the hinterland could be defended, as had been done always, and prepare the ground for deep penetrations to the continent.⁶¹⁶

Thus, the loss of one (Balsha) and the benefits of the other (Thopia), in fact, indicated a special situation in which Arbërians found themselves, who, since the thirteenth century, (from the emergence of the “Latin Empire of Constantinople” and hence), in addition to the

⁶¹² For more see assessment by Idrisi-i Bitlisi: *Hest Bihist*, 170 a-170 b - from “*Lufta shqiptaro-turke*” (*Albanian-Turkish War*”), 77-78, at Plasari, Aurel “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 211.

⁶¹³ In Ottoman historiography (see in Idrisi-i Bitlisi “*Hest Bihist*”, 170a from the “*Albanian-Turkish War*”, 128) the version according to which Karl Thopia was already a vassal of the sultan from the time of the conquest of the “vilayet of Karli-ilia” on 1382 is preserved. This view is also represented by the Balashi historian Guiseppe Gelcich, who says that “Karl Thopia, deposed from the throne, settled in Kruja and there he settled things well with the Turks in the hope that they could help him take power.” (See “*Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 143). The interpretation of the “call” of the Turks by Karl Thopia is also found in Pulaha: “*Hyrje në Luftën shqiptaro-turke*”, (“*Introduction to the Albanian-Turkish War*”), 12 and 26.

⁶¹⁴ For more see: “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 287-292.

⁶¹⁵ See Chalcocondylae, Leonici: “*Historarum Demonstrationes*” I, Budapestini, 1922, faqe 45.

⁶¹⁶ Jiriček, Konstantin: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, Part Two, Tiranë, 2010, p. 137; Ostrogorski, Georg: “*Historia e Perandorisë Bizantine*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 382

pressure of constant invasions coming from Rascia and the earlier Bulgarian ones under whose rule they would be involved twice in a period of more than a century, they were already confronted with the Ottoman factor, whose invasions, though threatening everyone, were accompanied by actions that seemed incomprehensible at the same time, such as those of their relatives with the Byzantine emperor (Kantakouzeno IV) and alliances with the Ottomans against Western countries (of the Palaeologus against Genoa).

It was therefore an unpredictable situation when the inevitable war of the cross against the Ottoman crescent was frequently avoided with another in which the cross fought against the cross aided by the Ottoman crescent!

This was the social and political framework in which Arbërians found themselves and their ethnic space when the Ottomans appeared in their lands.

To better understand the historical context of that development, when they will mostly appear as vassals of the vassals and thus be forced to follow the events in accordance with the direction assigned to them by others, (mostly the Triballi princes of Rascia, who managed a good part of their countries), such as the Battle of Maritsa, the one fought in Belice of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that of Dardana Plain, much of which remains unclear, one must go back to the Ottoman factor on the eastern borders of the Empire as well as the penetrations towards the western part of Byzantium which will, to a large extent, be influenced by all the social and political developments of the time inside and outside imperial dimensions.

Thus, it can be said that the Ottomans were descendants of the Oguz Turks. These began to penetrate the eastern parts of the Empire after being detached from their core in Central Asia. The empire will initially pay no attention to their penetrations, as it had trouble with the internal behavior of Slavs and Bulgarians, but also with those coming from the Arabs, with whom there will be frequent and very challenging confrontations from the 7th century onwards. The first Byzantine encounter with the Seljuks took place in 1071, when the imperial army suffered heavy losses resulting in the loss of a large part of their possessions in the East.

The Oguz Turks made history when their leader, Ertugrul, received a small tribute from the Seljuk sultan on the banks of the Sangaria River. Since the Seljuk state disintegrated into very small parts after the defeat inflicted on the Mongols in 1243, it was his son, Osman I (1290 -1323), who expanded his paternal possessions and turned it into an independent state called the Ottoman Emirate, which became the nucleus of the Ottoman Empire. On this occasion, Osman received the title of sultan and his subjects were called Turk-Ottomans.⁶¹⁷

Here, then, one relates to 1354, when the Ottomans moved to Illyricum, from where they set the preconditions for further conquests, which a little later will also touch the Arbërian lands scattered in feuds and numerous despots, who after the death of the Despot of Rascia, Dušan (a year later), were involved in a development aimed at the restoration but also of the expansion of autonomy lost during the Rascian conquests. Thus, the well-known noble families of the Balsha in the north, the Muzakaj, Thopia, and others, began their efforts to expand and establish independent principalities. Here one can see Balsha (Balshaj), who, in addition to expanding to the north, managed to take Prizren and settle in most of Dukagjin.⁶¹⁸

In this development, which can be called internal - as Arbërians behaved in their own space and in accordance with an inevitable loyalty to the Byzantine or in vassal relations with Westerners, such as Venice, whenever inevitable - they felt the Ottoman threat, but without

⁶¹⁷ Inxhik, Halil: "*Perandoria Osmane*", Tiranë, 2010, pp. 381-382; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 373.

⁶¹⁸ About the expansion of Balshaj in Prizren and Dukagjin in 1372 see: Jireček, Konstantin: "*Historia e Serbëve*", I, Tiranë, 2010, p. 486; Gelcich, Giuseppe: "*Zeta dhe dinastia e Bashajve*", Tiranë, 2009, pp. 29-45; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 304-307; Frashëri, Kristo: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2009; Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010.

any direct confrontation with it. They would even stay away from it, even when in 1364, at the Battle of Adrianople, the imperial armies were defeated and declared Edirne their capital.

Even in the whirlwind of struggles to expand their principalities, even to the detriment of each other, as was the case between the Balsha and Thopia, they will remain during the first match of a military alliance led by the Rascian lords, the Mrnjacevic brothers, (Vukašin and Uglesa) in the Battle of Maritsa in 1371, when their forces aided by the Bulgarian and Greek suffered heavy losses, resulting in the acceptance of Ottoman vassalage by the princes of Rascia and those of Epirus.⁶¹⁹

The direct non-involvement of the Arbërians in the orbit of the Ottoman military operations from the time of their direct military incursions in the southeastern part and their settlement in Bulgaria and Thrace after they had conquered Andrianopolis (Edirne) from 1345-1361, does not mean that they had been “spared” by the Ottomans since the first friction with the Byzantines (11th century). Some sources make it clear that the first “contacts of a special fighting nature” of the Arbërians with the Ottomans are marked by the West, on the occasion of the landing of Charles Anjou in Arbëria as he proclaimed the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”.⁶²⁰

In the notes of the Venetian Sanudo it is said that Charles Anjou had in Arbëria some 200 Saracene archers, who, under their commander Musa, were used in the fighting against the Byzantine troops, though were also used against the “Arbërian rebels”.⁶²¹

In addition to the service of Charles of Anjou, the Turkish mercenaries were also seen as engaged by the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus, on the occasion of the submission of the Despotate of Epirus during the time of Nikephoros (12771-1269). It is known that a mixed contingent of Greeks, Turks and Cumans besieged Janina in 1293.⁶²²

Byzantine sources indicate that Ottoman troops must first have known the lands of Arbëria in 6854 (1336/1337), when Andronicos III Palaeologus, summoned by Despot Ana Paleologus-Angelos, entered Arbëria and Epirus to suppress revolting Arbërians in the areas between Valagri, near Berat and Kanina. For this purpose, the Empress took two thousand mercenary Turks from the districts of Izmir and Konia and, with the arrival of spring, entered with them into the “land of the Illyrians”.⁶²³

However, the situation from indirect “encounters” of the Ottoman mercenaries in the service of the Westerners but also Byzantines for certain and temporary actions in the lands of Arbëria, which, as will be seen, will be used by high imperial circles, will change immediately as the Ottomans, a year later, after taking Plovdiv (the capital of the Bulgarian Kingdom) and Bulgarians accepted Ottoman vassalage, would appear in Thrace and Epirus, such as their penetrations in Shtip, Perlep and Manastir, Kostur and Ohër. And, together with the Palaeologus, some nobles and feudal lords of Arbëria, from the Despotate of Epirus will be forced to accept a state of vassalage. From there, the Ottomans would approach the coastal cities, where they knew they would face Venice and the West, whose attitude could best be tested with parts already possessed by the Arbërian princes, even in a state of hostility such as that between the Balshaj and Thopia.

Thus, Savra was a very good test for the Ottomans. They took part in that battle and even determined the winner, but at the same time they left, so that the victory would be “given” to

⁶¹⁹ See: Jirecek, C: “*Geschihte der Bulgaren*”, p. 309; By the same author, “*Historia e serbëve*”, I, Tiranë, 2010, pp. 480-485.

⁶²⁰ See Plasari, Auerel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 203.

⁶²¹ See: Minieri-Riccio: “*Il regno di Carlo I*” XXII, 25, Note. 6; Hopf: “*Geschihte*”, I, 300, Note 63 (ASN). *Acta Albaniae*, I, no. 297, cit. Plasari, A: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 203.

⁶²² See: “*Το Χρονικόν των Μορεῶν*”, II, 8792-9087, and “*Chronique de Moree*”, 277-289.

⁶²³ See: Gregorae: “*Historiae Byzantinae*”, I, 146, 544-545 and Joannes Cantacuzenus *ex Imperatoris Historiarum*, I,II, 495-501, cit. According to Plasari, A: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 204. On the activities of Turkish mercenaries in Arbëria see also: “*Lufta shqiptaro-turke*”, 33, Note 6.

Thopia as a vassal, a vassal who will be accepted by Muzaka and the rest of the southern feudal lords, which was nothing more than a warning that what had begun would not stop.⁶²⁴

Indeed, the temporary “withdrawal” of Ottoman forces from Savra (for about two years) was a test that the Ottomans were doing to the Venetians and other Western factors as to how they would behave after their further steps, which could not be any different from the tactics of accepting vassalage, which gave them great favors, even if they benefited from the tribute they paid to their subordinates, being thus “accommodated” in the new circumstances of an empire and another civilization, which in the circumstances of the reigning chaos and general insecurity brought little security, even if they were prepared for further penetrations into the West, which in advance required a “pacification” of the parts connecting the East with the West. Though, this “peace” seemed to be a reflection of a reality that could be useful to them as well, especially if it created the impression of an economic development that also tied the interests of local feudal lords.

Certainly, “peace” between the Christian vassals, where most of the Arbërians were already willingly and unwillingly involved with their possessions and titles, could continue for a good while, or even longer, if it were not for the Westerners, who, knowing that such a “accommodating” situation outside the suffocation and anarchy of the last century in which the Empire was involved, also on its own “merits” related to its weakening or destruction through the strengthening of the Slavic and Greek despots, would suit the Ottomans, to better prepare for new conquests towards the European center, would begin to encourage them to fight against the Ottomans, even though they knew it would all end in defeat. It was important gaining time, regardless of the price to be paid by the Illyricans, who were already accustomed to such sacrifices.

Of course, in the face of this state of uncertainty and fear, but also of hope that something could be defended, the impression was that the despots and princes of the broken crown of Byzantium from the part of Illyricum and Dardania were obliged to launch a joint action, although it will soon be seen that even there certain accounts and various tricks were present. Supported and advised by numerous missionaries from Catholic countries, in 1387, the initiative for the creation of a broad Illyricum coalition began. Although it will all be described to Rascia’s Triballi prince Lazar Hrebëlanovic, from where the invitations for joint action come, though the Holy See, Venice, and above all Hungary were behind it. The latter, in fact, had many reasons to be outraged, being the next target of the Ottoman campaign against Europe, which had to inevitably pass through its lands.

The movements of the Christians of the western part of Byzantium, directly instigated by the Westerners and under the Christian flag, used as the only “unifying” emblem in those circumstances, although in its name the Christians had waged many wars between themselves, put the Ottomans into action as well. To secure their backs and get out of the game any action by the Bulgarians, whose space already represented an important strategic factor towards the European center, during 1388, they concentrated their forces in Plovdiv on the line to Nish, a city they had invaded two years before. Meanwhile, part of Rascia up to Prishtina and Scupi remained out of Ottoman control, namely the center of Dardania, parts of which appeared to be owned by Christian prince Vuk Branković, of Triballi descent (from whose family Gjon Kastrioti’s, Vojsava, also descended),⁶²⁵ and were partially under the control of Balsha, while the Lezha-Prizren road was under the supervision of Dhimitër Jonima.

⁶²⁴ About the call that Thopia addressed to the Turks for help in the fight against Balsha II as well as the vassality see at length: Gegaj, At Athanas: “*Arbëria dhe Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbe 1405-1468*”, Tiranë, 1995, p. 33.

⁶²⁵ For more at length see: Petrovski, Boban: “*Vojsava Tribalda*”, at Symposium on “Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg”, Skopje, 2006, pp. 67-77. That the Brankovics were Triballi, that is, remnants of an ancient tribe close to the Dardanians, but according to the Byzantine chronicler Chalkokondila “*The Triballi were an Illyrian branch*” (See: “*Historiarum Demonstrationes*”, I, Budapest, 1922, pp. 24-25). This is also claimed by Barleti and Gjon Muzaka, who when they announce about Gjon Kastriot’s wife, Vojsava, show that her father was a Triballi.

THE BATTLE OF DARDANIA OF 1389 – BETWEEN REALITY AND MYTH

At the beginning of June, the Ottoman troops, after crossing Nis, headed to the Plain of Dardania, where already, along with the armies of several rulers of Arbëria (George II Balsha - son of Strazim from Shkodra, who was Lazar's son-in-law (he had married his daughter Jelena), Theodore Muzaka of Myzeqea, Dhimitër Jonima, lord of the territories along the Lezhë-Prizren road and Andrea Gropa of Ohër),⁶²⁶ were waiting for those of the Triballi Prince of Rascia Lazar and the local (Dardanian) ones of his son-in-law, Vuk Branković. They were joined by Romanian forces led by Voyvoda Mircea, Croatian troops led by Croatian Ban Ivan Horvat, and Bosnia's leader Tvrtko.⁶²⁷

According to some historical sources, the Battle of Dardania Plain began on June 15, 1389 and ended the same day by evening with the defeat for the forces of the Illyricum Christian alliance.⁶²⁸

Sultan Murat I was killed in the battle, who is said to have been killed by Milesh Kopili, a local nobleman from among the ranks of the Arbërians,⁶²⁹ called *Miloš*, first *Kobilić* and later *Obilić* by the Slavs. Milesh was the son-in-law of Prince Lazar, a random occurrence of intermarriage in medieval circumstances. Lazar also died after being taken prisoner of war. The same fate befell Milesh Kopili, who at some point in the 19th century, as the myth of Kosovo was built for Serbian hegemonic purposes, would be celebrated as a "Serbian national hero". Meanwhile, the Albanians, relying on the historical continuity of their ethnicity in these parts from antiquity onwards, will treat him "as their own".

From among the Arbërian leaders Muzaka fell in the battle. That same day, the slain Sultan was replaced by his son, Bayezid I, known by the nickname "*Yıldırım*" (Lightning).⁶³⁰

⁶²⁶ On the participation of the Arbërians in the war of the Dardana Plain, see: Pulaha, S: "*Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shek. XV – burime osmane*", Tiranë, 1968, p. 297; Sathas, C: "*Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi*" vol. I, 1872, pp. 247-248; "*Kronika e Gjon Muzakës*", pp. 301-365 at Xhufi, Pëllumb: "*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*", Tiranë, 2009; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", I, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 366-367; Frashëri, Kristo: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë; Frashëri, Kristo: "*Shqiptarët dhe beteja e Kosovës*", in "Rilindja javore" 9-15 July 1995; Gegaj Athanas: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë 1995; Mallezi, L: "*Shqiptarët në betejën e Kosovës*", Tiranë, 1998; Plasari, Aurel: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010, pp. 194,195. And, in Ottoman authors: Soklakzade: "*Tarihi*", 43; Nesri: "*Kitâb-i Cihân-nüma*", 70-72, 80; Idris-i Bitlisi: "*Hest Bihist*", 182; Sa'deddin: "*Tâcü tevarih*", 120, Uzunçarşılı: „*Osmanli Tarihi*", I, 200, 249; Oruç Ben Adil; "*Tevarih-i al-i osman*"; Inhalxhik, Halil: "*Perandoria osmane*", Shkup, 2010, etc.

⁶²⁷ For more see: Hammer, Joseph von: "*Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*" vol. I, Pest, C. H. Hartleben 1840; Jireček, K: "*Historia e Serbëve*" I, Tiranë, 2010, "*Geschihte der Bulgaren*", Prague, 1876; Gelcich, G: "*Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 169-171; Jorga, N: "*Geschihte des osmanishchen Reiches nach Quellen dargestellt*", Vol. I-II, Gotha 1908-1909; Fine, J. V. A: "*The Early Medieval Balkans*", Michigan, 1983; Malcolm, Noel: "*Kosova një histori e shkurtër*", Prishtinë, 2001, pp. 59-67; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 336.

⁶²⁸ The date discrepancy concerns the acceptance by the Serbs of the Gregorian Calendar later than the rest of Europe; for the Ottomans the date is 19 Jumada II 791, ie 15 June 1389. Despite this the differences continue. Thus, K. Frashëri mentions the date of June 27 (See: Skënderbeu, Tiranë, p. 42), while a good part of Serbian historiography mentions the date 27 and 28 June.

⁶²⁹ About the Arberian affiliation of the feudal lord Milesh Kopili see: Maltezi, L: "*Beteja e Fushës së Kosovës (1389) dhe kontributi i Shqiptarëve*" ("*The Battle of Kosovo Plain (1389) and the contribution of Albanians*"), Studime historike, Tiranë, 1989, and "*Mbi pjesëmarrjen e Shqiptarëve në Betejën e vitit 1389 dhe përkatësinë etnike të Millosh Kopiliqit*" ("*On the participation of Albanians in the Battle of 1389 and the ethnicity of Millosh Kopiliqi*"), Tiranë, 2005; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 376; Rizaj, Skënder: "*Shqiptarët dhe serbët në Kosovë*" ("*Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo*"), Prishtinë, 1991, and "*Kosova dhe shqiptarët dje, sot dhe nesër*" ("*Kosovo and Albanians yesterday, today, and tomorrow*"), Prishtinë, 1992; Malcolm, Noel: "*Kosova një histori e shkurtër*", Prishtinë, 2001, pp. 69-83.

⁶³⁰ For more see at Uzunçarşılı: "*Osmanli Tahiri*", I, pp. 200, 249-250; Hammer, Joseph von: "*Geshichte des Osmanischen Reiches*"; I, Pest, C. H. Hartleben 1840; Gelcich, Giuseppe: "*Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*", Tiranë, 2009, pp. 169-171; Čorović, V: "*O Kosovskom boju 1389*", in "*Zadužbina Kosova*", Prizren-Beograd, 1987; Čorović, V.: "*Istorija srba*",

Although from the point of view of historical facts this war remains with many mysteries, especially in terms of the actual size (much narrower than those of the nineteenth century descriptions), and the role of local factors in it (beyond any alliance of wide military, mostly on volunteer units), however some data on what this war brought about, show that the Ottomans went through a new stage of consolidating their invasions in Illyricum, creating preconditions for further conquests towards the center of Europe. Thus, these sources indicate that Bayezid, after defeating the forces of the Christian alliance, was not vengeful towards the losers, as expected. On the contrary, he turned Vuk Branković into a vassal, who some sources say fled the battle, because he allegedly had some disagreements with his father-in-law and the like as conjured up in the 19th century by Serbian historiography for hegemonic purposes trying constantly to convert the Triballi and Arbërians of the Orthodox affiliation into Serbs, thus allegedly making “a betraying son-in-law” as cause for the loss until the his celebration as a vassal of “enemy”, which would not be said for a “true” Serb.⁶³¹

Citing sources from the field of folklore and with no sufficient historical arguments, found precisely in the demystification of this war by means of scientific treatment of the overall ethnic, social and political factors of the time in accordance with the circumstances that led to the agony of Byzantium and the strengthening of the Ottomans, and others of this nature, even some Albanian scholars, relying on the factor of autochthonous ethnos with Dardanian continuity, defend the position on the Arbërian affiliation of Milesh Kopili and others as a common autochthonous Christian consciousness, whether Orthodox or Catholic and by no means as a national one, which appears in the nineteenth century.⁶³²

Despite various objections about the affiliation of those that the historical epic of one or the other people will use as myths in the service of historical memory and its transformation into an inspirer of national consciousness, such as that of the nineteenth century onwards, however, it can be said that the key historical match between the Christians of Illyricum and the Ottomans, during June 1389 or somewhere nearby, had to happen in Dardania, because it was decisive for the further progress of the Ottoman conquests in Europe, in a geographical space, which, since antiquity, appeared as a node from where the Euro-Asian space was supervised. Therefore, an empire that claimed to reach world proportions, such as the Ottoman one at that time, had to be placed there, as had happened with the fate of previous empires and the division of Christianity.⁶³³

Beograd, 1989; *“Istorija srpskog naroda”*, Beograd, 1994; Jovanović, K.D: *“O Arbanasimia”*, istorijska studija, Beograd 1880; *“Kosovska bitka i posledice”*, group authors, Beograd, 1991; Kovačević, L: *“Istorija Srpskog Naroda”* I, II, Beograd.

⁶³¹ For more on this see: Debeljković, Dena: *“O Kosovskom Boju”*, in *“Antologija Srpske Narodne Epike Kosova i Metohije”*, 1964; Kostić, Dragutin: *“Miloš Kopilić-Kobilic-Obilić”*, Revue Internationale des Etudes Balcaniques, I, 1934; Subotić, Dragutin: *“Yugoslav Popular Ballads”*, Cambridge University Press, 1932; Djordjević, Tihomir: *“Boj na Kosovu”*, Beograd, 1934.

⁶³² For more see: Arapi, Fatos: *“Këngë të moçme shqiptare”*, Tiranë, 1986; Drançolli, Jahja: *“Në kërkim të origjinës së Milosh Kopiliqit”*, Prishtinë, 2006; Pirraku, Muhamet: *“Pjesëmarrja e Shqiptarëve në betejën e Kosovës 1389”*, Gjurmime Albanologjike, series of historical sciences, Prishtinë, 1990; Pulaha, Selami: *“On the Presence of Albanians in Kosova during the 14th-17th Centuries”*, Tiranë, 1993; Riza, Skënder: *“Falsifikimet e Historiografisë Serbe/The Falsifications of Serbian Historiography”*, Prishtinë, 2006; Murzaku, Thoma: *“Lufta e banorëve të tokave lindore”*, Second Conference of Albanological Studies, Tiranë, 1969; Drançolli, J: *“Njoftime burimore rreth origjinës së Milosh Kopiliqit”*, “Illyria”, no. 441, 1995.

⁶³³ There are various often contradictory assessments of the Battle of Dardana Plain and its significance: from those that magnify it (*“This victory strongly stabilized Turkish rule in Illyricum”*) - Inalxhik, H: *“Perandoria Osmane”*, Shkup, 2010; or: *“The battle that will decide for five centuries the fate of the Illyrian Peninsula”* – Miller, William; *“The Balkans”*, to those that diminish it altogether, such as the estimates of the Romanian historian Jorga when he says that *“1389 was nothing but an incident exaggerated by legend”*. The magnification of the name of this battle beyond measure was helped by some of the Ottoman chroniclers, starting from the verses of Ahmad of the 15th century: *“Horses were trampled on corpses that lay floor by floor on each other”* (see Ahmed: *“Dastan ve Tevarih”*, 50), as well as the chronicles of Shukurullah, of which Pulaha says that “Shukurullah and all the Ottoman chroniclers after him, in order to increase as much as possible the victory of the Ottoman Turks in Kosovo in 1389, say that the coalition of Illyrian feudal lords also included the Vlachs, Czechs, Hungarians, Bulgarians and the Venetians. “In fact, this statement is wrong, because only Slavs, Bosniaks, and Albanians participated in this coalition.” For Pulaha, the figures they provide for the coalition army are also exaggerated. (See *“Lufta shqiptaro-turke”*, 31, Note 10)

Therefore, it was natural that the rise of the Ottomans to the West would start at the expense of the Christians of Illyricum, and at the same time with their help, though being the first to oppose (in the Battle of Maritsa and then in Fushë-Dardania Plain), after losing the latter, will turn to the vassals of the Ottomans, a situation that will help them strengthen and extend their conquests to the western world.⁶³⁴

Among these helpers the first and most useful to the sultans were the Rascians, who used the last stage of the weakening and disintegration of Byzantium to strengthen themselves at its expense. Most stable alliances with them will be reached from the time of Bayezid I onwards, for the most part to the detriment of the Christians of Illyricum, but also of Western Christianity in general.

In fact, the Rascians' ties to the Ottomans had begun earlier. This supports the claim that the history of Ottoman expansion in Illyricum was a history of their cooperation with the Christians of the Orthodox rite, based on the example of the Byzantine emperors (Kantakouzene) and their experience with the Ottomans in the eastern parts of the Empire from the beginning of the 13th century onwards, which paved the way for their further conquests vibrant from the beginning of the 14th to the 15th century. Thus, the Turkish mercenary units in these parts are exploited by the Rascian despot Milutin, using them against the Byzantine army. Certain sources claim that about one thousand and five hundred Turk soldiers of the Cuman tribe settled in Rascia.⁶³⁵

Stefan Dušan will also use the experience of using Turk mercenaries. It is known that Dušan had several units of Cumans in his army, whom he meant to use to win the "crown" of Byzantium. This would not have happened without a deal with the Ottomans, who could have interests in their plans to penetrate to the heart of Europe in introducing into the game useful players, such as the Rascians, known for such deals.⁶³⁶

Some later sources even speak of a foreplay of that account, which was to influence the epilogue of the Battle of Dardania, or a similar one that would have taken place before or after for the benefit of the Ottomans, to then benefit from by concluding a peace treaty with the Ottomans, whereby, always under the Rascian umbrella that would replace the Byzantine one, the Orthodox princes of Illyricum as part of the Ottoman Empire could retain some of their privileges, without consideration as to what would happen to Catholic countries.⁶³⁷

The fact that during the Battle of Dardania Plain, the forces of a generous Rascian noble called Dejanovic fought on the side of the Ottomans, as many Vlachs from his principality fought on the side of the Ottomans too, cannot be hidden from history being also confirmed by Ottoman sources.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁴ See Fine: *"Late Medieval Balkans"*, Michigan, pp. 293-309; Oikomondies, N: *"The Turks in Europe"*, pp. 159-62.

⁶³⁵ For more on the Ottoman mercenaries in the servile of Despot Milutin see: Oikonomides, N: *"The Turks in Europe 1300-1315 and the Serbs in Asia Minor 1313"*, pp. 159-62, in E. Zachariadou, edit, *"The Ottoman Emirate 1300-1389"*, 1993; Jireček, C: *"Staat und Gesellschaft in mittelalterlichen Serbien"*, II, p. 58.

⁶³⁶ See: Malcolm, Noel: *"Kosova një histori e shkurtër"* (*"Kosovo a brief history"*), Prishtinë, 2001, p. 61; Mavramitis, L: *"La Fondation de l'empire serbe: le kralj Milutin"*, Salonica, 1978; p. 72, Jireček, C: *"Staat und Gesellschaft in mittelalterlichen Serbien"*, I, p. 78.

⁶³⁷ About the connections of the Rascians with the Ottomans before the military confrontations with them began, and which continued even after the battle of Dardana Plain, see the numerous authors, among whom Jozef von Hamer: *"Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches"*, 1827; Zinkesen J. W: *"Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches in Europa"*, Hamburg-Gota 1840-1863; Jorga, N: *"Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches"*, Gotha 1908-13; Dölger F: *"Regester der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453"*, München-Berlin, 1965; Babinger, F: *"Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke"*, Leipzig 1927; Forretr, L: *"Handschriften osmanischer Historiker in Instambul"*; Ferjanočić B-Maksimovič, Lj: *"Vizantijci i turci u vreme Kosovske bitke"*, 1957; Новакович, С: *"Срби и Тузи XIV и XV века"*, Београд, 1960; Malcolm, Noel: *"Kosova një histori e shkurtër"*, Prishtinë, 2002, pp. 63-69; Bastov, S: *"Die Türkischen Quellen des Laonikos Chalkandryles"*, München 1960, pp. 34-42; and others, that the opening of this thesis as well as its defense will be referred to by the conduct of Lazar's son, Despot Stefan, who was among the first to accept the vassality of the Sultan and even with his armies took part in the coming battles of Ottomans against Hungarians and Poles. The behavior of Djurad Brankovic when he will sabotage the Second Battle of Dardana will be used in a similar way, just as the behavior of Kraljevic Marko will be used later.

⁶³⁸ For more see at Pulaha: *"Lufta shqiptare-turke"* Neshri's testimonies and others, pp. 55, 76,93; Babinger, F: *"Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und Ihre Werke"*, Leipzig, 1927.

This behavior confirms that the Orthodox Slavs and others who belonged to this consciousness, not coincidentally, saw the Ottomans as the only “savior” that could protect them “from the Catholic danger”, against which they never stopped acting.⁶³⁹

Regardless of what will follow after the defeat of the Illyricum Christians in Dardania, during that battle so much glorified in the nineteenth century, or any other, that happened, Bayezid’s behavior towards the Illyricum Christians (Triballi, Bulgarians, Romanians, Arbërians, Slavs, Greeks and others) clearly shows that he was focused on using their power for himself as a dividing line with Hungary. Thus, Bayezid felt the need to have an ally in Illyricum, in the most vital part, in his active military policy, at a time when he aimed at the Seljuk-Turkish principalities in Asia Minor, whose stability was also important, to focus on the West.⁶⁴⁰

For this, Bayezid I agreed that the two sons of the Triballi Prince Lazarus, who was killed by his sword, should be the leader of the Rascian principality and rule according to their laws, traditions and customs. Though, they’d be obliged to submit to him and pay the *jizyah* (the tax imposed to the Ottoman state) and have a certain number of soldiers, in separate units, who would take part with them (the Ottomans) in Haruja. The Sultan also married the daughter of Prince Lazar, Olivera, also called Despina.⁶⁴¹

This marriage took place with the approval of the patriarch and the Orthodox clergy and Despina was sent to the great harem in Brusa, where she met other countless wives of noble, Greek, French and Seljuk descent.⁶⁴²

Stefan and Vuk were forced to appear every year in the Bayezid’s court with an army helping the Sultan’s army whenever required, the way Despot Constantine, Despot Esau of Janina, Angelos of Thessaly, and the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Paleologus did.

Sources of the time indicate that the Hungarian Zigismund had mobilized a good part of his forces to protect himself from occasional incursions of the Ottoman and Rascian troops, which were jointly operating in the border areas. It is known that in 1390, the Pan of Severin and Magistar Ladislav ransacked Ottoman and Rascian flags in Branicevo.⁶⁴³

Vuk Branković, whose possessions extended from Zvecan, Prishtina to Scupi, began to show similar behavior, although it is no coincidence that he is known in Albanian folklore sources as *Ujkan*, while in Ottoman records as *Vlk*, corresponds to the Albanian form *Uk-Ujkan*. After he asked Ragusa for asylum for himself, his wife Mara and his three sons (Djuradj, George, and Lazar, in case “the Hungarians or the Turks or someone else would expel him”) and it will be granted in May of 1390, Branković handed over Skopje to the Ottomans, as well as Zvecan, Prizren and a good part of the possessions in these parts.⁶⁴⁴

Thus, the old Dardanian city, which only two generations ago had been the starting point of the Rascian conquests against the Arbërian lands, became a major supporter of the Ottoman conquests against the North and also the South.

On this road, in 1394, the Ottomans took Ohër of Gropas. In order to weaken the position of the nobles of Arbëria, to expropriate as much as possible, they destroyed almost all the castles they held on these sides (Struga, Pogradec, and Starova). The Ottomans did the same during the conquest of Janina, Korça and Përmet. As stated earlier, this punishment was meted out to them because they untruthful to the Ottomans, which was not the case with the

⁶³⁹ See author Bierman, Ralf: “*Lehrjahre im Kosovo*”, Bonn, 2006, where the Serbian vassal behavior towards the Sultan before the battle of Dardana is assessed as follows: “*Serbs seemed more threatened to be invaded by Catholic Hungary, than by the Muslim Turks*”. Also on this topic see the report of the bishop of Tivar, Guillem Adea, “*Directorium ad passagium faciendum*”, of the year 1332, addressed to the King of France, Philip VI Valua.

⁶⁴⁰ Salabri, Muhamed Ali dr: “*Perandoria Osmane – faktorët e ngritjes së saj*”, Prishtinë, 2009, p. 87.

⁶⁴¹ Idem, p. 87.

⁶⁴² Jiriček, Konstantin: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, Part Two, Tiranë, 2010, p. 153.

⁶⁴³ Idem, p. 153.

⁶⁴⁴ “*Acta Albaniae*, II, 467, Sources II, no. 131; Da Lezze: “*Historia turchesca*”, p. 8; Jiriček, K: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, p. 155.

Triballi princes, Slavs and Greeks, who from the beginning had shown a penchant for secret games with the Ottomans, benefiting from the downfall of the power of the Arbërian nobles and feudal lords.

Their conquests in the North (from Zvecan to Shkodra and Ulqin, then to Deja and Kruja), followed almost the same course of action, though here the Ottomans had in mind the preservation of assets (mines), which they had to use for their needs. In the castle of Zvecan, a Turkish “cephalus” was placed, while in the iron mine on the outskirts of Rascia, the first *kadi* was appointed to oversee and direct it.

However, the Ottoman occupations in the North did not pass without difficulty and without military confrontations, which had not happened in the parts possessed by Vuk, for which, as stated earlier, he had vassalage ties with the Ottomans to maintain his possessions in Dardania, also as he gained much more weight than under Rascian supervision, although this reckoning will not succeed, as the Ottomans for well-known reasons related to the organization of imperial power in the occupied parts, decided since the year 1420 to extinguish all such vassal ties in this part.⁶⁴⁵

Thus, the Ottomans had to confront the Balshaj before taking Ulqin, where they residence was, as well as Shkodra. It is known that in 1391 Gjergj Balsha asked for support from Pope Boniface IX, but this did not help him much. Since he had been taken hostage by Bayezid, he will be released a year after he surrenders Shkodra, Drishti and the port of Shëngjin.⁶⁴⁶

Another nobleman, Dhimitër Jonima, did not follow Balsha’s path. He accepted the Ottoman vassalage and thus managed to preserve his possessions between Shkodra and Durrës, which, for the new invaders, were of great importance.⁶⁴⁷

Along with Gjergj Balsha, who was forced to accept vassalage, and Jonima, who through him retained his possessions, were the Dukagjini (brothers Progon and Tanush), who, in the summer of 1393, handed over Lezha to a Venetian admiral, responding to the settling of the Ottomans in Buna by occupying the Drin estuary.

Thus it will last until 1402, when the Ottoman conquests in the Arbërian lands stopped for ten years. The reason for this was the Battle of Ankara that year, in which the Ottoman troops suffered a heavy defeat by the Mongol armies led by Tamerlane. Brothers Stefan and Vuk Lazarević and their nephews, brothers Branković, the Sultan’s vassal, attended also with Bayezid in this battle.⁶⁴⁸

After the death of Bayezid I, who had just returned from a one-year captivity from Timur in Aksehir in old Phrygia, for a whole decade the Ottomans were involved in a civil war for the throne of the Sultan’s sons. Their vassals were also involved in that war: the Lazarevićs on the side of Musa and Branković on the side of Mehmed I with the nickname “*kurisji*” (possibility), who headed from Asia to the European part of the Empire, where he will emerge victorious after killing his brother Musa in the Battle of Philippopolis in July 1413.⁶⁴⁹

Under the leadership of Mehmed I (1413-1421), the Ottomans turned to Illyricum to continue where Bayezid I had left. Advised by his main aides in Illyricum, the Brankovićs and other Orthodox feudal lords who followed him, Mehmed I was convinced that the Arbërian lands had to be completely appeased, as they had an important position to create an internal anti-Ottoman cohesion in Illyricum as well as the ability and tendency to connect with

⁶⁴⁵ See: Fine: “*Late Medieval Balkans*”, pp. 411-12; Ćirković : “*Kosova u srednjem veku*“, p. 45; Babinger, F: “*Die Geschichtschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke*“, Leipzig, 1927; Emmert, T.A: “*Serbian Golgotha: Kosovo, 1389*“, New York, 1990.

⁶⁴⁶ For more see: Hamer, Jozef von: “*Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*“, Vol. II, p. 175 and 183; Gelcich, Giuseppe: “*Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve*“, Tiranë 2009, pp. 179-181;

⁶⁴⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*” I, Tiranë 2002, faqe 377.

⁶⁴⁸ For more see: Chalconcandylae, Leonici: “*Historiarum Demonstrationes*“, ed. S. Darko, Budapestini, 1922; Giese, F: “*Die Altosmanischen Anonymen Chroniken*“, II, Leipzig, 1925; Kandić, J: “*Despot Stefan Lazarević i turci*“, Beograd, 1982
Inhalxhik, Halil: “*Perandoria Osmane – periudha klasike 1300-1600*“, Shkup, 2010.

⁶⁴⁹ Inhalxhik, Halil: “*Perandoria Osmane – periudha klasike 1300-1600*“, Shkup, 2010.

Westerners, with whom they could form alliances to turn into their supporters in this part. This would threaten Ottomans' intentions towards Central Europe.

That some of the Arbërians were able to change things so as to not suit the Ottomans, this was already seen during the decade of crisis that had engulfed the Ottomans after the defeat by Tamerlane, when they had begun to expand their feudal lords, as was the case of Niketa Thopia, who, after the tragic end of Konstantin Balsha, had taken possession of his property, who as a vassal of the Venetians owned Kruja (1402-1415). Also in Mat, the feudal lord Gjon Kastrioti appeared, managing in a short time to become master of the lands from the Cape of Rodi in Durrës, Lezha and Shkodra and supervise the roads to Prizren and Skopje. As a citizen of Venice and Ragusa, like most Arbërian nobles and feudal lords of the North, Gjon (John) Kastrioti swayed between the two churches, the Catholic and the Orthodox, maintaining good relations with both. Thus, in addition to the support of Catholic clergy and abbots, at the same time, with gifts, he also covered the monasteries of Hilandar with which he had early connections.⁶⁵⁰

Gjon Kastrioti was originally a vassal of Venice, but soon had to submit to the Ottomans (1410),⁶⁵¹ who, as soon as they returned to Illyricum, targeted the Arbërian princes and their ties with the Venetians and the West. Thus, Mehmed I, maintaining the alliance with the Orthodox princes (Hasians, Bulgarians, and Greeks), who were not only reliable vassals, but also collaborators in all campaigns against the Hungarians, Bosnia and others, did not find it difficult to include the Arbërian princes and feudal lords on the ranks of the vassals. After all, the Arbërians were also part of the volatile political cosmos of Byzantium.

In this campaign, in addition to subjugating the Arbërians, Mehmed I had in mind to further strengthen the main allies and vassals, the Rascians, including Palaeologus and the Greeks. Thus, Mehmed I gave Despot Stefan the Koprani in Nis, the province of Znepolje in Trn, the mountains between Nis and Sofia, and some other parts. Likewise, the vassal Emperor of Byzantium, Manuel, was given back the cities taken by Musa.⁶⁵²

Even closer ties were established between the Rascians and the Greeks. The grandson of Despot, George, married for the fourth time to Irena from the Kantakouzene family. Thus, countless Greeks entered the service of the Rascians, including Irena's brother, Thomas Kantakouzene.⁶⁵³

But the Rascian orthodox dynasts, who by now were the main supporters of Mehmed I and his right hand, were also interested in the Ottoman campaign, in addition to the overthrow of the Arbërian nobles and feudal lords, which had already been strengthened, to destroy their alliances with Venice, or when this did not work out, appearing as overseers of these alliances supported by the Ottomans, who had already turned their Rascian allies into key partners in Illyricum.

In this way, the Ottomans acted in Novo Berdo. In 1412 it was attacked and besieged, but was eventually left to a descendant of Lazar's family. With the death of Niketa Thopia, in early 1415, the Ottomans conquered Kruja. During 1417 they took Berat from Theodor Muzaka and Kanina together with Vlora from Rugina Balsha. In 1418, however, they occupied Gjirokastra, the center of the Zenebishi.⁶⁵⁴

These invasions took place at the time when Mehmed I, although defeated by the Venetians in a naval battle before Gallipoli (1416) was forced to make peace with them. This suggests that the Ottomans had reached an agreement with the Venetians over their location in the Arbërian area, in which case they would keep the parts inside, while the Venetians would occupy the coastal cities.

⁶⁵⁰ Jireček, Konstantin: "*Historia e Serbëve*", Book Two, Tiranë, 2010, p. 173.

⁶⁵¹ See: Thalloy – Jireček: "*Zwei Urkunden aus Nordalbanien*", Arch. Slav. Phil. 21, 1899.

⁶⁵² Schreiner, P: "*Die Byzantinischen Kleinkroniken und die Anastik beri den Südslaven*", Bulgarian Historicval Rewiew 6-1978, pp. 45-54.

⁶⁵³ For more see: Serb. Annalen, Glasnik 53, 80; dhe Новакович, С: "*Срби у Турци XIV и XV века*", Београд, 1960.

⁶⁵⁴ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 377.

The last offspring of the Balsha family, who had already lost much of his possessions, under the support of his uncle, Despot Stefan Lazarević and stepfather Sandalj, went to war against the Venetians, who were involved in a war to expand the Adriatic invasion with Sigmund of Hungary, whereby the Hungarians were defeated, while the Adriatic Republic settled in Split, Trogir and the islands of Brac, Korčula, and Lesina in order to bring Kotor under its supervision.⁶⁵⁵

Balsha was forced to attack Venice after seven years and besiege the castle of Drisht. The Venetians responded with the conquest of Budva. Thus, the need arose for peaceful negotiations and, as foreseen by the despot Stefan Lazarević, whom Balsha having no son of his own, had appointed as heir, they would take place without Balsha and under the leadership of the Rascians, as Balsha died on April 28, 1421, and was solemnly buried by Stefan.⁶⁵⁶

Balsha's death seems to have ended the glory of one of the most powerful Arbërian princely families in the north, which for more than half a century was present on the political stage with the interests of Byzantium and the West crisscrossing on one side and those with the Ottomans intersected on the other.

Although Balshaj did not manage to face the challenges of this clash among the greatest of the time, nevertheless with the actions to be played from one side to the other, even as losers, they managed to put the Arbërian factor in a big game, in which the feudal lords and other princes became involved. And this will be the last act of a historic match preceding the centuries-old Ottoman occupation.

This act, lastly sealed by Sultan Mehmed II the conqueror a little later, will be followed by Murad II, who came to power after the death of his father, Mehmed I (1421). Murad II, convinced that the decisive battle to penetrate further into the West had to go through Arbëria, put himself at the head of the military campaign, one of the greatest of the time. His army was commanded by an experienced general, Isa Bey Evrenos. After some fighting, with mutual losses, the Ottomans won. This led to the establishment of the timar regime in the southern parts, thus ending the feudal autonomy that had characterized the Byzantine circumstances, on which the independent feudal lords and principalities had been established, not only in Arbëria, but also in other parts.⁶⁵⁷

The demolition of the independent principalities of Arbëria (Balshaj, Thopia and Muzaka), however, was followed by the establishment of the other three great feudal possessions: Dukagjini, Arianites, and Kastrioti. These commitments included mountainous provinces and a population with ancient war traditions, where serfs formed a minority, and the vast majority were free peasants who did not recognize feudal relations and had found a weekend modus with the local nobles.⁶⁵⁸

As a result, the free peasants of Arbëria were more interested than the peasants in fighting the feudal-military invasion.⁶⁵⁹

Even the Dukagjini, Arianites, and Kastrioti with their possessions, although going through a phase when the Ottomans were already in the process of setting vassalage and establishing full power, tried to take advantage of such not so promising circumstances. Neither the "art" of trying to maintain constant ties with Westerners (especially Venice), who also benefited from these circumstances, could be of help to them.

However, out of all of this, the Dukagjini managed to maintain some "independent" commitments in the northern mountainous parts, under the name "Dukagjini Province" in ancient Dardania. Similarly, the Arianites, who lost much of their possessions, retained the

⁶⁵⁵ Gelcich, Giuseppe: "Zeta dhe dinastia Balshaj", Tiranë, 2029, pp. 173-170.

⁶⁵⁶ See: Stanojević: *Arch. Slav. Phil.* 18 (1896), 459; Gelcich, Giuseppe: "Zeta dhe dinastia e Balshajve", Tiranë, 2009, pp. 322-341; K. Jireček: "Historia e Serbëve", Book Two, Tiranë, 2010, p. 186.

⁶⁵⁷ See: Inxhik, H: "Suret-i Defter-i Arvanid", Ankara, 1954; Frashëri, Kristo: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 45.

⁶⁵⁸ See: Frashëri, Kristo: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 46.

⁶⁵⁹ For more: Inxhik, H: "Suret-i Defter-i Arvanid", Ankara, 1954.

name of nobility, which will be transferred later to the historical memory from external chronicles.⁶⁶⁰

It was similar with the Kastriotis and their possessions, which, no matter how shrinking, will occupy a key place in the history of Arbërians and Arbëria thanks to the events that will take place in that area from 1443, the beginning of the glorious age of Skanderbeg.

The campaign for submission of Arbërians would be incomplete without the end of Dardania, the key part connecting East and West, rich in mines and ores. There, under the direction of the last remnants of the Triballi despots of Rascia and under their influence, the destiny of a large part of Dardania will be decided, as the Ottomans left it in the hands of their allies, the Brankovićs (Vuk), who had accepted Ottoman vassalage and was called *Vlk-oglu* by the Turks.⁶⁶¹

However, in these lands, which were of a special economic importance, because of the well-known mines of Novobërdë and Zvecan, during the years 1394 -1444, the Ottomans placed their servants and soldiers to supervise their products, which now could not go, as before, in the direction of Ragusa or Venice, but would end up in the treasuries of the Ottoman state. Prior to the final conquest by the Ottomans, in 1455, the local government of Vuk (*Vlk-oglu*) “coexisted” with the Ottoman one, though the latter had the main say.⁶⁶²

Much of Dardania, north of Scupi and Tetova, came under Ottoman rule during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror (1451-1481). Of course, the target of the Ottoman conquests were the well-known ores of Novobërdë, Zvecan and Gllahovica (the latter rich in iron). Some sources say that “the Sultan had gathered the Islamic army launching a holy war from Scupi, from where he would cross to Mount Kara Tonlu (Skopje’s Karadak) to Novo Berdo. Novobërda, which the Sumerians called *Neuberger* and the Italians *Novomonte*, had a strong fortress and several surrounding miners’ settlements. It housed the main Ragusan colony, but was also inhabited by Italians, especially Venetians. Many local nobles also lived there, who supervised the extraction and processing of the ores, as well as shipping it to other countries.

As these minerals were important, the Sultan had decided to place them under full supervision, which he did by using the army, although local nobles still wanted to abide by the agreements they had made with the Ottomans in 1441 for shared exploitation. Isa-bey, who with a portion of the army had arrived before the sultan there, summoned the local commander to surrender voluntarily. As this was not done, the sultan himself set out with the rest of the army to attack Novobërdë. The siege began immediately, lasting forty days. After several bombings, as the castle’s defensive walls were being demolished, on June 1455, the city surrendered. A good part of the city’s leadership was wiped out, while a portion of the youth, 320 of them, were taken as janissaries.⁶⁶³

It is said that there the Ottomans had found numerous treasures (large quantities of silver) that Vuk’s son kept, a treasure that was sent to the Istanbul treasury.⁶⁶⁴

The fall of Novoberdo, considered the stronghold of the Catholic Christian world, was greeted with bitter impressions in Italy and Hungary. Despot Djuradj Branković learned of the

⁶⁶⁰ About the Arianites and their history see extensively at Babinger, Franz: “*Fundi i Arianitëve*”, Tiranë, 2004; “*Kronika e Gjon Muzakës*” at Xhufi, Pëllumb: “*Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt*”, Tiranë, 2009, pp. 365-457.

⁶⁶¹ Turkish historians: Sadedin, Neshri and Ashikpashazade in their chronicles speak of “*Vilayet Vlk*” and vassal *VLK-oglu*, which the 19th century Serbian historiography fixes as Lazarevic and Brankovic, especially the latter, calling on this case the “*Vilayet VLK*” (Kosovo) as “*Oblast Brankovica*”, that if linguistically decomposed “Vlk” means “Ujk” (“Wolf”) or “Ukë”, which corresponds to the patronymic “Ujkan”, widespread in the Albanian language. The case of “*Vilayet VLK*” and its naming as “*Oblast Brankovica*”, translating the name “*Ujk*” or “*Ukë*” into “*Vuk*”, best shows the extent of falsification of Serbian historiography to invent at all costs the so-called medieval Serb state based in Kosovo with “Serbian despots”, allegedly legitimized by the Ottomans, when it all speaks of a local feudal, orthodox, by many sources of time described as Triballi, whose name is explained in Albanian! (See at Nikolić, Maja: “*The Byzantine Writers on Serbia 1402-1439*”, Beograd, 2010, p. 41).

⁶⁶² For more: K. Jiriček-J. Radonić: “*Istorija Srba*“, I, Beograd, 1952, pp. 369, 422.

⁶⁶³ Babinger, Franc: “*Mehmed Pushtuesi dhe koha e tij*”, Prishtinë, 1989, p. 145.

⁶⁶⁴ Rizaj, Skënder: “*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVIII*”, Prishtinë, 1982, p. 20.

defeat on June 21 in Hungary at a rally of the gentry in Rab, where large-scale plans were being prepared for a Christian forces campaign against the Ottomans.⁶⁶⁵

Ignoring what the Christians had in mind, Sultan Mehmed continued with his forces in the direction of the castle of Trepça, occupying it without any great effort. Great wealth was also found there. More silver mines were seized with Trepça. After staying for a short time in (sehitlik) - the place where Sultan Murad I was killed, Sultan Mehmed returned to Thessaloniki and from there to Edirne.⁶⁶⁶

THE DOWNFALL OF ARBËRIAN PRINCIPALITIES AND OTTOMAN SANJAKS

Although the establishment of Ottoman rule in Arbëria will go through several stages - from that of vassals - in 1371, 1385 and 1389 until the first conquests between 1412-1420, to continue with those of 1445-1456, concluding with the fall of Shkodra in 1479 - it brought down the Arbërian princes (Kastrioti, Dukagjini, Jonima, Arianites and others), as well as their possessions from feuds to independent principalities as part of the political realities of the disintegrating Byzantines, giving way to the timar system that radically changed the property structure.

Similar incidents took place in Dardania and Epirus, where the removal of the tribal dynasty of the Nemanjaj of Rascia and their remnants (Lazarević, Branković, and others) was followed by their downfall.

The Ottoman conquests, which ended vassal principalities as well as vassalage, were followed by the establishment of an Ottoman state apparatus relying on feudal military property, known as the timar system. This type of property, very similar to that of Byzantium, enabled the new mode of government on which the Ottomans built their system of governance, that of defense, production but also the collection of taxes as the basis of state income.⁶⁶⁷

Initially, it can be said that the administrative arrangement of the Ottoman Empire was in line with the territorial expansion of the Empire, which had undergone significant changes since the Ottomans, from the eastern power, after crossing the Illyricum part, began to expand their conquests to other western parts. The Ottoman state was divided into several territorial-political units: the *sanjaks*, which were divided into smaller units - the *kaza*. At the time of Murad I, the *eyalet* or *beylerbeylik* was formed as a large unit of the Empire. In the beginning there were only two of them, that of Rumelia, established in around 1362 and the *Eyalet* of Anatolia created in 1393. The center of the *Eyalet* of Rumelia (from the word *rum* - for Christian), it was Edirne, then Gallipoli and Plovdiv. From the 15th century, the center of the *eyalet* moved to Sofia, and later to Manastir.⁶⁶⁸

Although the idea of establishing an Ottoman centralist empire existed, the occupied provinces, depending on their characteristics, were arranged in different forms. Near the

⁶⁶⁵ Zachariadou, E.A: "Süleman çelevi in Rumili and dhe Ottoman chronicles", Der Islam, 60/ 1983, pp. 269-296 and Babinger, Franc: "Mehmed Pushtuesi dhe koha e tij", Prishtinë, 1989, p. 146.

⁶⁶⁶ Idem, p. 20.

⁶⁶⁷ More about the timar system, the state budget and legal law see: Georgieviz, Barth. "De turcarum moribus", Helmeštaddi, 1671; d'Ohsson, M: "Tableau gjenéral de l'Empire Othoman", Paris, 1824; Urquhart: "Turkey and its resources", London, 1833, pp. 17-20; Barkan, Ö. L: "The Ottoman Budgets" (Revue de la Fakulte des Sciences Econ. De l'Univer, d'Istanbul, Vol., XVII/1955-6, pp. 193-346); Hamer von Josef: "Des Osmanischen Reiches Staatsverfassung und Staatverwaltung", Wien 1815, pp. 309, 407 and 413; P. Hoster, P: "Zur anwendung des islamischen Rechts im 16 Jh. Die juristischen Darlegungen (ma'ruzai) des Schejch ül-Islam Ebu Su'üd (ges.1574), Stuttgart, 1935; Inalcik, H: "Land Problems in Turkish History", Muslim World, Vol., 45 (1955).

⁶⁶⁸ Rizaj, Skënder: "Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII", Prishtinë, 1982, p. 41.

eyalets there was also an administrative form “*hukümetler*” - *self-governing territories on tribal bases*, led by tribal leaders (*ahiret*).⁶⁶⁹

According to this principle, the Arbërian highlands also enjoyed internal autonomy. The Ottoman *Kanunname* states that “Kurdish, Arbërian, and Arab bayraktars were safe and independent, though they were very poor and powerful, while the voyvodas of Wallachia and Moldavia were not safe and so independent”.⁶⁷⁰

Montenegro was also organized as an autonomous territorial-political unit with tribal composition under the supervision of the Sanjak of Shkodra and Dukagjin. It was called *Vilayet Karaca Dag*, and was divided into 9 districts (*nahiye*).⁶⁷¹

In addition to the autonomous units and their status in accordance with the circumstances, with ethnic character and certain cultural and historical traditions usually taken into account, there were also ecclesiastical ones, which were not only protected by special imperial decisions “*berates*”, issued by the sultans, but also enjoyed numerous privileges and rights, which in some cases went as far as the status of extraterritoriality, as was the case with the Center of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul) and the Holy Mountain in Atos (Hilandar) of Greece.⁶⁷² the Orthodox Church won in an agreement with Sultan Mahmud II after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

This status, which can be compared to “state within a state” with 200 priests in twenty churches of different peoples,⁶⁷³ the orthodox church gained by an agreement concluded with sultan Mahmud II after the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Seeing the importance of the Orthodox Church as well as the benefits it could have, the sultan hastened to confirm to the Orthodox Church the status it had during the Byzantine Empire. In this way, the sultan succeeded in turning the Byzantine church into a strong ally. On the occasion of this agreement, the Orthodox Church provided numerous privileges, among which, the most important was the one dealing with the fact that the Christian affiliation was identified with the Christian ethnicity. With this the church took over the spiritual care of all Christian believers and within this, a social supervision, as the church authorities at the local level were allowed to organize the administration of Christian believers (*raya*) in many areas of life including the right to liturgy and ecclesiastical education (liturgy) in the mother tongue. With these rights, in a way, the ecclesiastical organization was being treated as a parallel local government, similar to the time of Byzantium, a factor that in the nineteenth century would be used for the national movements of Christians of the Eastern rite on religious grounds in accordance with the corresponding liturgical language (Greek, Bulgarian, Russian and Serbian).

Although the hierarchy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was usually headed by Greek patriarchs, who will try to preserve the Greek character of Orthodoxy, the Bulgarian, Russian and especially Serbian ones will also benefit greatly from the Ottoman autocephaly of the church, which, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, under the pressure of Russian Pan-Slavicism and the right gained by Russia at the Paris Peace Conference of 1856 to supervise the Orthodox Christians of the European part, would translate ecclesiastical identity into national identity.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁶⁹ See Hamer, Joseph von: “*Das osmanischen Reichs Sraatsverfassung und Staatsvewaltung*”, Vol. II, Wien, 1815; Rizaj Skënder: “*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*”, Prishtinë, 1982, p. 42.

⁶⁷⁰ Albert Howe Lybyer: “*The Gouvernement of the Ottoman Empire in the time of Suleiman the Magnificent*”, Cambridge Harvard University Press, London, 1913, p. 297 and Rizaj, Skënder: “*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*”, Prishtinë, 1982, p. 42; Stadtmüller, G: “*Osmanische Reichsgeschichte un balkanische Volksgeschichte*”, Leipziger Viertelsj. Für Südosteuropa, no. 3/1939, pp. 1-24.

⁶⁷¹ Đurđev, B: “*Turska vlast u Crnoj Gori u XVI i XVII veku*”, Sarajevo, 1959, p. 95.

⁶⁷² The church organization on the Holy Mountain in Athos (Hilandar) is called the “priesthood republic”. It has been accepted as such since 1430 when the Ottomans conquered Thessaloniki. (See: Villemain: “*Essai historique sur l’etat des Grecs depuis la conquete jusqu’anos jours*”, Paris, 1825 and Gelzer, H: “*Vom Heiligen Berge*”, Leipzig, 1904, p. 25.

⁶⁷³ Novaković, Stojan: “*Tursko carstvo pred srpski ustanak 1780-1804*”, Beograd, 1906, p. 263.

⁶⁷⁴ Ястребов, И. С: “*Подаци за историју српске цркве*”, Београд 1879, pp. 1-27.

In addition to the autonomous and ecclesiastical territories, the Ottoman government, in the medieval area of Dardania, Macedonia and Epirus, known as Arbëria, in various periods of the 15th century, created several sanjaks: the Pashasanjak of Skopje with 344 timars, Sanjak of Vuçitërnë with 317 timars, Prizren sanjak with 225 timars, Shkodra sanjak, Dukagjini sanjak with 53 timars, Elbasan Sanjak with 138 timars, Ohër Sanjak with 342 timars, Vlora Sanjak with 439 timars, Preveza Sanjak, Janina Sanjak, Sanjak of Arbëria (*Sancak-i Arvanid*), and others.⁶⁷⁵

The *Shkup (Skopje) Sanjak* was the most important as it included 22 nahiye with a very wide expanse: from Thessaloniki to the east and west to Gostivar and Kërçova. Sanjak of Arbëria (*Sancak-i Arvanid*) came next, with Gjirokastra as its capital. It stretched from Chameria to the Mat River. It was part of the *Eyalet* of Rumelia. The Sanjak of Arbëria was divided into small units, which included several provinces (*nahiye*).⁶⁷⁶

At the head of the *sanjak* was the *sanjakkbey*, who was the commander of the sanjak army, composed of several hundred *Sipahis*. At the head of the vilayet was the *subase*, commander of the *Sipahis* who had *timars* in the respective vilayet. In each of the vilayets, close to the *subases*, were the *kadilars*, heads of the offices of Sharia (Holy Law), who performed administrative, civil, judicial, and religious duties. There were other leaders of the Ottoman state administration by the *kadilars*. These were the *naive*, deputies to *kadilars*, and the *imams*, functionaries of the Ottoman cult. In every city there was also the *dizdar*, commander of the castle guards. All of them were provided with timars. The non-Muslim (Christian) population was considered *raya* (submissive).⁶⁷⁷

When it comes to the *raya* and its treatment in the Ottoman Empire, the issue leads to the basic principles on which the origin of the Ottoman state is based, among which the ideal of *holy war* was an important factor for the establishment and development of the Ottoman state. For, the first Ottoman principality, which was founded in 1302 (after the victory over the imperial army at the Battle of Nicaea, resulting in the conquer of the former capital of Byzantium), relied entirely on the principles of *Darulislam* (the world of Islam). The Ottoman expansion and conquest towards the West was motivated by the idea that *the world should be turned into an Islamic empire*. Though the *holy war*, which was very successfully waged by the Ottomans, was not intended to destroy it, but rather subdue the world of the wicked, *darulharb*. Thus, the Ottomans established their empire by uniting Muslim Anatolia with the Christian Illyricum under their rule, and although the ongoing *holy war* was a fundamental principle of the state, the Empire was, at the same time, the protector of the Orthodox Church and of millions of Orthodox Christians.⁶⁷⁸

Islam guaranteed the lives and property of Orthodox Christians and Jews, provided they were obedient and paid a tax per capita. It allowed them to practice their religion and live according to their religious laws. During the early years of the Empire, the Ottomans pursued a policy of trying to secure voluntary submission and belief of Christians before it came to war.⁶⁷⁹

After the Ottomans crossed the Bosphorus in 1326, there would be no “voluntary” submissions, as had happened in some border provinces when Mihal Gazi, a feudal lord of the Greek border, had converted to Islam and collaborated with the Ottomans.⁶⁸⁰

However, what would later turn into a war of submission would be mediated by a period of vassalage, which presented a kind of overture to later conquests. Vassalage turns into a general phenomenon in Illyricum after the Battle of Maritsa, in 1371, when one after another the Illyrian princes were forced to accept Ottoman subjugation. The behavior of the Byzantine

⁶⁷⁵ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 379.

⁶⁷⁶ *Idem*, p. 379.

⁶⁷⁷ *Idem*, p. 380.

⁶⁷⁸ Inalxhik, Halil: “*Perandoria Osmane*”, Shkup, Prishtinë, Tiranë, 2010, p. 19.

⁶⁷⁹ *Idem*, p. 19.

⁶⁸⁰ *Idem*, p. 19.

emperor, Palaeologus, who sought the support of the sultan to protect the throne, will also help to turn it into a social and political reality.

Since the Ottomans respected the principles of feudalism, this caused them to demand only a small annual tribute from their vassals, as a sign of submission to the Islamic State, which did not weaken their material position. But over time, as the Ottoman government needed more and more taxes to cover the growing state spending needed on military campaigns in the West and East, vassal princes began to feel increasingly compelled to opposition, which would later lead to known conflicts with the Ottoman Empire. Between 1441 and 1460, Sultan Mehmed put an end to the vassal principalities, turning them into permanent parts of the Empire. Consequently, this will mean an overthrow of one system and the establishment of another, from which the structures in line with the well-known Ottoman state concept will be established. Under these circumstances, the hitherto vassal feudal lords came under state supervision by converting to *timars* or dispersing in *yaya*, as compensation for military service, thus becoming Turkish farmers serving with the army. Thus the Ottoman regime had established a centralized administration instead of feudal decentralization, as it had gained strength during the last stage of Byzantium, creating general regulations instead of taxes and privileges that had free to act under feudal supervisors.⁶⁸¹ In this system, *timar* represented the basic factor on which income was based, but also protection. Its designation as property owned by the state was held by the *sipahi*, who was responsible for it but also for the well-being of agricultural products. Therefore, the Empire hurried to take control of the property and its inhabitants as soon as it came to power in the occupied territories, in addition to administrative division, so that nothing would escape the new system. On this occasion, the state entrusted the sipahi with other authorizations, making him responsible for the order in the village.

The *timar* system was intended to provide troops for the sultan's army, maintaining a large cavalry force controlled by the center. When the sultan ordered a war campaign, the Sipahis, under the command of the Subase, joined the ranks behind the flag of the Sanjakbey. The Sanjakbeys gathered under the banner of the Beylerbey, and each beylerbey then joined the Sultan's army at the time and place ordered.⁶⁸²

Thus, the *timar system*, as an administrative organization, from the beylerbey to the sipahi, represented the *executive power of the sultanate in the provinces*. They formed some kind of a police force, tasked with protecting the raya in the country, and at the same time had important tasks for collecting taxes and enforcing land laws. At the head of the police administration was the *beylerbey*, who represented the sultan's power in the province.⁶⁸³

Under the *beylerbey* came the *defterdar* and *defter ket hydasi*, who regulated matters concerning timars, while the *hazine defterdari* regulated the affairs of the sources of income belonging to the central treasury of the state.

From the beginning the *sanjak* was the main administrative unit of the Empire. *Several sanjaks made up the beylerbeylik or eyalet*, one of which was known as the "Pasha Sanjak" and was under the direct administration of the beylerbey. Some smaller units, known as *subasiliks*, made up the sanjak, while the *subases* themselves lived in the city and commanded the Sipahis to live in the villages of their district.⁶⁸⁴

The *has* property of the beylerbey was distributed throughout the sanjaks, while those of the sanjakbey were distributed among the subasiliks.

Another division of the provinces was done according to the *kadilik*, the administrative and legal region of the *kadi*. The kadi himself lived in the city. *The kadi was the axis of the*

⁶⁸¹ See: Babinger, F: "*Mehmed der Eroberer und sein Zeit*", München, 1953.

⁶⁸² Inihalxhik, Halil: "*Perandoria Osmane*", I, Shkup, 2010, p. 217.

⁶⁸³ Idem, p. 223.

⁶⁸⁴ Idem, p. 224.

Ottoman administration, and in the 15th century the kadi could rise and become sanjakbey or beylerbey.⁶⁸⁵

The third pillar of the provincial administration was *Hazine Defterdari*, who, just as the relevant person in the central government, represented the interest of the state treasury. Thus, the centralization of government was intended to prevent pashas in the provinces from becoming omnipotent. The *janissary* garrisons also served this purpose⁶⁸⁶ located in cities, which were another force to prevent local authorities from enforcing arbitrary force.⁶⁸⁷

The *Janissary* forces numbered between three hundred and five hundred and operated only under the sultan's command. This form of Ottoman administration was also established in Arbëria, although as previously stated, it went through two stages of expansion: the first one related to the conquests of Mehmed I from 1431-1455, when he penetrated from the part of Plovdiv to the West conquering the vassal despotates one by one, to end with the capture of Novobërdë, which was under the possession of the sultan's vassal, Despot Vlk, whom the Serb historiography, in its incessant efforts to convert the Triballi and Arbërians into Serbs, calls Branković,⁶⁸⁸ and the second, from 1479-1485 when the whole country would fall under five centuries of Ottoman rule.

It must be said that the conquests of the first and second stages end with the inclusion of the lands of Arbëria under the *eyalet* of Rumelia, a name derived from the word *rum*, which means Christian, while *Rumeli* is the land of Christians. Since Arbërians, as well as other peoples of this part, were Christians, it was only natural that they had to be included in this administrative part, where they remained throughout the Ottoman rule.

When it comes to defining the *eyalet*, as a large administrative unit, consisting of sanjaks, however, the vilayet should also be mentioned, as a unit located within the sanjaks, but which has a more special meaning, because the Ottomans, called the newly conquered lands of Christians *vilayets - provinces* enjoying special status. They were usually run by locals.⁶⁸⁹

So the *vilayets* could be called the *administration of the country*, since the Muslim religion had not yet spread to European lands to a considerable extent. The *vilayet* could be of different sizes. Only from the second half of the 19th century did *vilayets* mean the largest administrative unit of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹⁰

The establishment of the Ottoman power, like in other parts, was followed by the cadastral registers of the Sanjaks (*Defter-i Sancak*) which were part of the *eyalet*, where the administration of the imperial state apparatus was tied. The earliest document discovered so far of this nature is a cadastral register of the year 835 h (1431-1432), named the "*Register of the Sanjak of Arbëria*" (*Defter-i Sancak-i Arvanid*). It includes a part of the western areas, stretching from Chameria to the river Mat. In addition to reflecting the distribution of timars

⁶⁸⁵ Idem, p. 225.

⁶⁸⁶ The Janissary Order represents the contingent of elite Imperial troops, founded in the 14th century, at the time of the Ottoman incursions into Illyricum and the West. This order usually included the children of Christians who were subject to the *devsirme*, or blood tax, given to the Sultan. The children taken to this order were sent to Istanbul and trained with great dedication to become warriors. In addition to military skills, they underwent spiritual education under the supervision of the Bektashi order. The Janissaries had no right to family. Almost all the military successes of the Ottoman Empire are related to the order of the Janissaries. In the 17th century, it was decided that the Janissary troops would be disbanded in favor of a professional army. Sultan Selim III took this decision, while the order was violently dissolved by Sultan Mahmud II in 1836, when he massacred several thousand fanatical dervishes and janissaries, who rebelled against the Sultan. From that time the order of the Bektashi was banned and all their tekkes in and around Istanbul were destroyed. A part of the Bektashis, however, found safe haven in Albanian areas and in Bosnia, where they continued their well-known activity. During the National Awakening the Bektashi community sided with the national movement and some of them were even militants of Albanianism. (For more see Palmer, J. A. B. "*The Origins of Janissaries*" (*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*), Vol. XXXV/1953).

⁶⁸⁷ Inalxhik, Halil: "*Perandoria osmane*", Shkup - Prishtinë - Tiranë, 2007, p. 226.

⁶⁸⁸ Nikolić, Maja: "*The Byzantine Writers on Serbia 1402-1439*", Beograd, 2010, p. 41.

⁶⁸⁹ Rizaj, Skënder: "*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XI dhe XVII*", Prishtinë, 1982, p. 50.

⁶⁹⁰ Idem, faqe 50.

at the time of drafting the register, there are also notes referring to the earliest periods, the time of Sultan Bayezid I (1389-1402) and Sultan Mehmed I (1413-1421).⁶⁹¹

Another *defter*, among the first, concerning the lands of Dardania, is that of *Vilayet-i Vlk* (called “Oblast Brankovića” from Serbian historiography),⁶⁹² made in 1455, after the conquest of Dardania by the Ottomans, through a campaign, which was personally led by Sultan Mehmed.

According to *Defter-i Mufasssal Vilayet-i Vlk*, this large vilayet was divided into 7 districts: Tërgovishte (Rozhaja), Kllopatnik (Drenica), Dolc, Morava (Gjilan), Vuçitërna, Topollnica, Prishtina, and Llab. To the south, the vilayet stretched as far as Skopje. Towards the east lay Leban. Towards the north-east to Bllaca and Prokupja. Towards the north to Priboj. While to the north-west to Rozhaja.⁶⁹³

A bit later, out of this vilayet the Sanjak of Vuçitërna was formed, which according to the records of 1477/78 shows the condition of the timars in the sub-districts of Vuçitërna, Llab, Upper Obrovç, Prishtina, Morava, and Toplica. A little later, this sanjak will be expanded with other parts as well. Thus, according to the records of 1521-1522, this sanjak included the parts up to Kopaonik with the part of Gollak, while in the south it reached as far as Montenegro of Skupi, including the following centers: Prishtina, Vuçitërna, Trepça, and Novobërdë.⁶⁹⁴

The *defters* of 1530/3 show that the Sanjak of Vuçitërna was divided into the following *kazas*: Novobërda, Prishtina, Bellasica, and Vuçitërna. There were 9 *kasabas* (Vuçitërna, Prishtina, Janjevo, Novobërda, Bellasica, Trepça, Lower Trepça, Bellobërdo, and Koporiqin), including 1,084 villages, 68 *meras*, *kifliks*, 4 mosques, 10 *masjids*, 42 monasteries, 4 *hamams* and 2 *karavansarai*. In the entire sanjak there were 26,573 inhabitants, a *sanjakkbey*, 4 *kadis*, 5 *zaims*, 293 *sipahis*, 1 *dizdar*, 48 fortified defenders, 13,780 *avariz* houses, who paid the *avariz* tax. The Sanjak had only 283 Muslims.⁶⁹⁵

The Sanjak of Vuçitërna will be important all the time and, in a way, it will become a barometer of social, economic and spiritual developments, bringing out the ethnic character of the autochthony of the Arbërians and later of the Albanians which in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries are reflected in a natural extension to the Sanjak of Nis.

The Sanjak of Prizren, that of Shkodra and Dukagjin, reflect the changes that these parts go through, from vassals to full occupation, characteristic for the circumstances between 1420-1479, when it restored the importance that these parts had for the construction of what it will appear as an ethnic whole with its own characteristics, such as the self-governments and the special statuses that these parts will have even during the Ottoman occupation.

Thus, it can be said that from 1455, when Dardania and the North of Arbëria fell under Ottoman occupation, these parts, in addition to the sanjaks of Vuçitërna and Skopje, were also administered by the sanjaks of Prizren, Shkodra and Dukagjin, which belonged to the Eyalet of Rumelia.

The *Sanjak of Vuçitërna* was the first Sanjak of medieval Dardania. This sanjak was formed after 1455, and after the extinction of the “*Vlk Vilayet*”, it included a good part of the area of Dardania, i.e. the areas from Kopaonik in the north to Karadak of Scupi in the south, from Toplica and Llap and Gollak in the east, and up to the Parish of Sijenica, Sharr and Drenica in the west, which naturally connect the ethnic Arbërian area. The Sanjak of

⁶⁹¹ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 378.

⁶⁹² See: Hadžibegović-Handžić-Kovačević: “*Oblast Brankovića*”, Sarajevë, 1972;

⁶⁹³ More about the conversion of “*Vilayet Vlk*”, as it appears in Ottoman documents, to “*Oblast Brankovića*”, according to the speculations of Serbian historiography see: Hadžibegović-Handžić-Kovačević: “*Oblast Brankovića*”, Sarajevo, 1972; Radonjić: “*Dorđe Branković i njegovo vreme*”, Beograd, 1911.

⁶⁹⁴ Idem.

⁶⁹⁵ Rizaj, Skënder: “*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*”, Prishtinë, 1982, p. 53.

Vuçitërna remained such until 1689, when it came under the jurisdiction of the Sanjak of Skupi.⁶⁹⁶

The Sanjak of Prizren, formed after 1459, included a very large territory, from Sharr in the south, to Yeni Pazar, Bihor and Bervenik in the north, from Drenica in the east to the district of Peja and Gjakova in the west. This sanjak too, in the new circumstances, restored the importance of the roads connecting Dardania on one side with the western parts, but also with the eastern ones.

On the other hand, the Sanjak of Dukagjin, whose history dates back to 1462, based in Peja and Lezha, included the territory, the nahiye (vilayet) of Montenegro, then the nahiye - the kaza of Peja and Altun-Ilia (parts from Gjakova to Tropoja) in the north, and to Dibër and Mat in the south, from Luma and Opoja in the east and up to Lezha (Adriatic) in the west.⁶⁹⁷

The Sanjak of Shkodra was formed after the invasion of the city by the Ottomans in 1479. It will be joined by several provinces of the Dukagjin Sanjak. According to the defter of 1485, the Sanjak of Shkodra was divided into 4 kazas: Shkodra, Podgorica, Peja and Bihor. The Kaza of Peja was divided into nahiye of Peja and Altun Ilia (part between Gjakova - Junik – Tropoja).⁶⁹⁸

However, the nahiye of Peja, towards the end of 1578, is part of the Sanjak of Dukagjin. While Montenegro, a little earlier (1576) becomes the Sanjak of Shkodra.⁶⁹⁹

A view of the sanjaks, despite the many changes, such as those when parts of them passed from one to another, can only be understood if followed by the real property registers brought by the Ottoman state in these parts, on which then all social, economic and political development will be supported. Of course, the starting point for this change was the *timar* system, which can be considered a kind of state feudalism, which as such a social order represented a step forward compared to the European one, which was in disarray. However, as early as the second half of the 16th century this system began disintegrating, and in its bosom began to arise the first elements of the feudal system, an order which, with its features, corresponded to a kind of specific feudalism.⁷⁰⁰

However, until a feudal system was reached, which would take more than a century and a half, the status of the occupied property in Rumelia enjoyed the treatment of *miriye* (*eraz-i miriye*, or *eraz-i memleket* = *state land*), meaning they were not allocated to the invaders, but rather given for use. Thus, the true estates given for use to the Ottoman authorities, that they perform military services, were called *dirlik*, and were categorized into three categories: *has*, *ziamet* or *ziamet* and *timar*. *Dirlik* was the property of subsistence, of the maintenance of the army, a kind of salary, which could not be inherited or sold. *Has* was the largest *Dirlik*. It generated an annual income of 100,000 akçe. Records of 1256-28 show that the *Sultan's Hases* were Prishtina, Trepça, and Novobërda. All the mines of Novobërda, Trepça, Janjevë, and others were declared *Hases of the Sultan*.⁷⁰¹

Gjakova was also a *Sultan's Has* with an income of 3 thousand akçe and other parts around. *Zeamet* or *ziamet* was a second category *dirlik* according to size, with an annual income of 20 thousand to 99 thousand akçe. It was given to the Alaybeylers, fleet commanders, and *timar* defter holders. The use of *ziamet* was called *zaim*. *Timar* was a third category *dirlik*, with an annual income of 3,000 to 19,999 akçe. In the sanjak areas where a part of the Dardania area was included, there were a total of 939 timars, of which 344 were in the Sanjak of Skupi, 53 in the Sanjak of Dukagjin, 225 in the Sanjak of Prizren and 317 in the Sanjak of Vuçitërna.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁶ Idem, p. 65.

⁶⁹⁷ Idem, p. 65.

⁶⁹⁸ "Defteri i regjistrit të Sanxhakut të Shkodrës i vitit 1485", I, II, Tiranë, 1974, prepared by Selami Pulaha, p. 5.

⁶⁹⁹ Rizaj, Skënder: "Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII", Prishtinë, 1982, p. 63.

⁷⁰⁰ Idem, p. 78.

⁷⁰¹ Rizaj, Skënder: "Rudarstvo Kosova i susednih krajeva od XV do XVII veka", Prishtinë, 1968, pp. 3-22.

⁷⁰² Rizaj, Skënder: "Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, VI dhe XVII", Prishtinë, 1982, p. 78.

In addition to the *derlik*, there were other categories of land: *vakif*, *ojaklik*, and *mukata*. These were plots of land that the state allocated to useful institutions: *mosques*, *madrasas*, *hospitals* and *dorms*. Among these land categories, however, *ojaklik* was of interest for the construction of leading and social structures in the occupied territories erected in accordance with imperial concepts. Thus, in addition to the commanders of the fortifications, called *dizdars*, these properties were also granted to local feudal lords, who embraced Islam and thus gained the right to be included in the ranks of senior Ottoman military commanders such as Rrotullaj, Mahmutbegolli, and Bushatli, who led the Sanjak of Prizren, Dukagjin, and Shkodra.⁷⁰³

In addition to state property, which was not hereditary, the so-called *bashtina*, which were hereditary, also appeared. It is about properties, such as vineyards, orchards and houses, belonging to Christians. *Bashtina* was father-inherited land.

The implementation of the timar system in the occupied lands, especially in those of Arbëria, which somehow restored the Byzantine ownership of the early stages, affected the various social strata also in different ways, whereby it brought the ordinary farmer close to the property he was working on, thus filling the state treasury and the structures above (the Sipahis and others from the state chain), though at the same time *ruining the local nobility and gentry*, which was generally stripped of its properties. Only a part of them was integrated into the ranks of the Sipahis and the leaders of the Ottoman state.

However, the establishment of the timar system with the Sipahis as its main bearers did not completely eliminate from the social and political stage the hitherto stratum and the role of the local nobles. The timar system radically changed the concept of property and its exploitation by turning it into state property strictly supervised by the established system, though it did not exclude local factors from being included in the system. For more, many facts and also actions show that the Ottomans used a very principled approach to the Arbërian nobility in order for it to become part of the system they established. Thus, from the beginning, some of them were included in the Sipahi system, without any religious conditions. But even without this turn of events, during the time of vassals, which could be seen as a preparation for the next invading system, the Ottomans forced the Arbërian nobles, including also the means of stimulation, to send their children as hostages to the court of the Sultan, as *il-oglan* (*page*), educated elite, where after converting to Islam, they were educated in the spirit of loyalty to the Sultan. After a decade, as true Ottomans were thought to have formed, according to their ability, they were equipped with large timars and high offices. The son of Gjon Kastrioti, Skanderbeg, the son of Theodor Muzaka, Jakup Bey, son of Gjon Zenebish, Hamza Bey, and many others, who will establish names in the high imperial hierarchy, passed through the institution of *iç-oglan*.⁷⁰⁴

Another measure motivating the overcoming but also the integration of a part of the Arbërian nobility into the Ottoman administrative and military system was that of the *gulam* (adult son). This had to do with the attitude of a part of the sons of the local nobles near the beylerbeys and sanjakbeys, who served near them to prepare for the career of an Ottoman feudal lord. After that, Islamized *gulams* could be granted their family or relatives properties as timars. Thus, *iç-oglan* and *gulams* of Arbërian descent received timars and posts not only in their own country but also in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁰⁵

Despite these developments, the implementation of the timar system in Arbëria not only did not go as expected - although in a way the expropriation of one part (feudal lords) was followed by the “ownership” (supply) of farmers with arable land, which was also a positive development – though followed by difficulties and even objections leading to various uprisings.

⁷⁰³ Idem, p. 79.

⁷⁰⁴ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 328.

⁷⁰⁵ Idem, p. 382.

Of course, this objection was expected, as the whole process was followed by violent measures, such as the census of the population and property (*mufasal*) - where there were many irregularities and arbitrary actions of the Sipahis to put as much surveillance as possible on large tracts of land, without paying attention to local relations and peculiarities - so that then the issue would be ignited by the actions of local feudal lords against this occurrence, who were immediately expropriated without any compensation. The opportunity offered to them to accept the system of the Sipahis and enter it was, in many cases, unacceptable due to the conditions, such as the acceptance of Islam, although this was not openly stated and it was not always said that it would happen, as there could be Christian Sipahis as well as high-ranking officials, but that was implied in those circumstances.

Under such circumstances, as the Sanjakbeys often used military forces to implement the timar system (attacking unbinding villages), turning them into ruins, revolts and armed uprisings were recorded. The revolts targeted the violent Sipahis, usually from the returning military ranks, who often became targets. In a register of 1431-1432, in the vilayet of Pavel Kurti, Cartagloz of Tomorica, Këlcyra, and others, no timar was in the possession of the Sipahis of foreign origin, who had been there in the previous census.⁷⁰⁶

The uprisings of the Arbërian nobility against the establishment of Ottoman rule in their lands, in the twenties and thirties of the fifteenth century, to then be related to those of the eighties, have to do with two factors of the time. The first concerned the expansion of the Skupi Pasha-Sanjak under the Evrenos family, which had been economically empowered, and this was to the detriment of the Arbërian feudal lords who were collapsing before his campaign, which was growing in all directions. While the second factor was related to the Ottoman-Venetian war for Thessaloniki (1428-1430), which required benefits, especially as it was thought that this weakened the position of the Ottomans, which had to be exploited.

As will be seen, this account will bring the Arbërians will only damage and no benefit at all, as it was impossible to stop the strengthening of Evrenoses (Gjon Kastrioti will understand this best when he is attacked by him together with George Branković's forces seriously jeopardizing his possessions for the return of which he asked for his sons' intervention, Skanderbeg and Stanisha to the Ottoman authorities, ending with an agreement with Isak Bey). Meanwhile, the accounts from the Ottoman-Venetian war for Thessaloniki turned out to be equally wrong, since the Ottomans, after signing the peace treaty with Venice, expelled the nobles and vassal princes of Arber from any connection or agreement with the Westerners, taking over the issue themselves. Here, too, Gjon Kastrioti's family will feel more damaged, as even after accepting vassalage (presumably in 1410) it maintained parallel ties with Venice by means of several agreements (those for guarantees given to the Venetians for the use of the Lezha-Prizren roads and other issues), which had to do with the country's interests.⁷⁰⁷

Despite Gjon Kastrioti's agreement with Evrenos, which led to some recovery of Kastrioti's principality, however, the sultan, encouraged by the agreement with Venice that secured Thessaloniki, as an important point connecting the eastern part with the newly conquered in European space, concentrated his forces in the Arbërian lands in order to move further towards the West, to put an end to the accounts with Hungary. Thus, it is known that in the winter of 1432-1433 the sultan settled in Serez. His target was Gjergj Arianiti, who had begun attacking the Ottoman Sipahis who had settled in the parts after he had been secretly released from the court of the sultan where he was being held hostage, from where he had returned to his homeland and started an uprising that day by day was getting bigger and

⁷⁰⁶ Idem, p. 385.

⁷⁰⁷ On the Kastrioti's ties with Venice see: Schmitt, Olivier Jens: "Das venezianische Albanien 1892-1479", München, 2001 and "Arbëria venedike", Tiranë; Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë; Plasari, Auerel "Skënderbeu", Tiranë.

bigger and threatening to ruin the achievements in setting up the timar system in many parts.⁷⁰⁸

Before settling accounts with the Arianites, the Sultan had to break the resistance that Andrea Thopia had begun, who after the *mufassal* registration was completely stripped of his possessions in the territory of Durrës, Petrela and Kruja, in order to put an end to the vassalage situation, which had to be followed by the full establishment of Ottoman power in these parts. Although the exact direction of this campaign against Thopia was not known exactly, however, he lost a good part of his possessions, especially the fort (Kruja, Petrela, and Danja) though his resistance in some parts continued even further and extended to near Lezha.⁷⁰⁹

However, Thopia's uprising was unlikely to involve Lezha or other northern parts, as Venice was there, which after losing Thessaloniki, by an agreement with the sultan, preserving Durrës, Lezha, Shkodra and some other parts on the coast, did not permit the nobles and the expropriated princes of Arbëria to settle accounts with the Ottomans. This was not even allowed to Nikollë Dukagjini, who, after passing through the part supervised by the Venetians, asked to return Danja. The Venetians prevented him from doing so and at the same time hastened to give it back to the Ottomans. From a letter sent by the Senate to the Sultan, it was made known that the Republic respected the peace with the Sultan, which he called "brother", and that for this reason the Count of Shkodra was ordered not to grant Nikollë Dukagjini or other insurgent leaders neither shelter nor support, neither money, nor property.⁷¹⁰

Under these circumstances, when Venice - Arbërians' main hope, had already made peace with the Ottomans, while the Kastriotis were also involved in a bilateral agreement (with the Ottomans and Venetians) for constraint, Thopia and the Dukagjini were left with nothing but a hope that the uprisings would appear in other possessions outside those of the Venice neighborhood. This, however, will come from Gjergj Arianiti (Arianit Komnini), who as soon as he was released from the Sultan's captivity in Edirne, returned to his possessions and ignited the uprising, announced with the killing of the Sipahis who had settled there as timarlis and running his properties.⁷¹¹

After the first successes, the uprising spread to the southwest of the country, with the aim of taking Gjirokastra, the capital of the *Arvanid Sanjak*.⁷¹² It is known that the Sultan, who was in Serez, entrusted the task of getting rid of Arianiti and his uprising to the commander of Skupi, Ali bey Evrenos, who came from that part and had the first and most important encounter with Arianit in the Shkumbin Valley, whereupon his forces suffered heavy losses from those of the Arbërians, who were energetic and able to avoid frontal confrontation. Evrenos, who was tasked by the Sultan to capture Komnin's son (Gjergj Arianiti), barely managed to cross to the rest and reunite the defeated forces in Epirus, but as a loser.⁷¹³

According to the Byzantine chronicler Chalkondil, the sultan had equipped Ali bey Evrenos to suppress the uprising not only with his army, but also with those of Axis (Skopje Sanjak). He had also instructed him to destroy the Arbërian lands with his army. However,

⁷⁰⁸ Bozhari, K: "Lufta shqiptaro-turke e shekullit XV. Burime bizantine", Tiranë, 1967, pp. 44-46.

⁷⁰⁹ Buda, Biçoku, Bozhari, Pulaha: "Dokumente rreth kryengritjeve shqiptare kundër pushtuesit osman në vitet 30 të shek. XV" ("Documents on the Albanian uprisings against the Ottoman conquerors in the 30s of the 15th century") in "Studime historike", no. 1. 1967, pp. 147-162, doc. no, Venice, 19 February 1432.

⁷¹⁰ Idem, doc. Nr. 9, Venice.

⁷¹¹ Bozhari, K: "Lufta shqiptaro-turke e shek. XV. Burime bizantine" ("The Albanian-Turkish war of the 15th century. Byzantine sources"), Tiranë, 1967, pp. 44-46.

⁷¹² Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 109.

⁷¹³ More about the Arianites uprising and their role in this development see by Babinger, Franz "Fundi i Arianitëve" ("The end of the Arianites"), Tiranë, 2004; Hopf, Karl "Chroniques greco-romanes inédites au peu connues", Berlin, 1873; "Despotes et dynastes d'Épire et de Thessalie"; Jakova, G: "Genealogi dei Prinviipi Albanesi", Frascati 1904; J. G von Hahn: "Udhëtime në viset e Drinit e të Vardarit" ("Journey to the Drin and Vardar areas"), 1865.

Arianiti had allowed the Turkish army to enter the mountainous areas, without encountering resistance, but on his return, he had taken their pathways inflicting heavy losses.⁷¹⁴

Apart from the defeat Evrenos suffered against Arianit and other Arbërian the princes and captains who joined the uprising (Thopia, prince of a part of Epirus Arnith Spata), not even the Sultan will fare better. In the calendar year 1434 it is noted that Sultan Murad entered with a large army in Arbëria, but there he was defeated again and although on both sides there was great losses in manpower, Andrea Thopia and Arnith Spata, general of the armies of Arbëria led the battle so well that the Sultan was forced to withdraw without any benefit, and at the end of the same year, the same Arbëresh commanders inflicted an equally deep defeat to Isak, general of the Turks, who, favored by the frost had entered the province to depopulate it.⁷¹⁵

Gjergj Arianiti's successes were followed with enthusiasm in Italy and Europe, as they were the first after many losses of Christians by the Ottomans. Pope Eugene IV himself, in September 1434, issued an encyclical to all the links of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to forgive the sins of all those who will help the holy war against the Ottoman enemy, the way the "noble men, princes, dukes, counts, barons and populations from of the Albanian nation" have been fighting.⁷¹⁶

They raised hopes that the Ottomans could abandon military campaigns to turn to agreements such as those of the vassal era, when they governed their possessions autonomously and paid tribute to them, or that they were overlooked for an indefinite time, this did not happen, although it may be said that during that decade as the Ottomans were led in a campaign against Hungary, its military intensity seemed to fall. There were two factors that helped: on the one hand, the exemption of Gjon Kastrioti, Nikollë Dukagjini, Andrea Thopia and other small benefactors, who had consented to the new situation on the condition that they preserve some of the privileges, although they could not be safe, and on the other hand, the well-known games of Venice not to allow the actions of the Arbërians to jeopardize its possessions in the lands of Arbëria, which it had secured after the peace made with the Ottomans in 1430.

At this time, it had been noted that Sultan Murad II tried to rely on those local nobles who were connected with the local Ottoman administration. In addition to Evrenos, who remained at the helm of the Pashanjak of Skopje during 1432-1438, the Sultan appointed a Sanjakbey of the *Sanjak Arnavud-ili* (Arbërian Sanjak) the son of Theodor Muzaka, Jakup Bey (1441), who was one of the most distinguished military men of the Ottoman Empire. He was killed in 1442 in a battle against the Hungarians. His brother Kasim Pasha, in 1442, is mentioned as the Bey of the *Sanjak Arnavud-ili*, while Kasim Pasha's brother, Suleiman, in 1449, is found in the post of the Subase of Berat. For more, in the summer of 1434, Balaban Bey was appointed to the post of Dizdar of Kruja. The Subase in Kalkandelen (present-day Tetova), in 1445, was also Hamza Bey of the family of Gjin Zenishti. Also a border commander of Sultan Murad II, Is-hak, was Arbërian.⁷¹⁷

Thus, Arbërians, co-founder of Byzantium, its main supporters, who in the last two hundred years had been in a fierce battle of appropriation between the eastern and western crosses, from where in various forms, such as the "*Despot of Arbëria*" or the "*Kingdom of Arbëria*" had the opportunity to determine their royal crown, in these circumstances, they were on the verge of disintegration in losing both their name and historical memory. The case of the agreement between the Ottomans and the Venetians after the war for Thessaloniki, as

⁷¹⁴ Chalcondylae, Leonici: "Historiarum Demonstrationes", ed. E.Darko, Budapestini, 1922 and Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu - jeta dhe vepra", Tiranë 2002, p. 111.

⁷¹⁵ See: Rizaj, Skënder: "Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII" ("Kosovo during the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries"), Prishtinë, 1982, p. 25; Frashëri, K: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu - jeta dhe vepra", Tiranë, 2002, p. 109.

⁷¹⁶ BBBP, *Dokumenta*, no.13, Firenze, 9 September 1434, cit. F. Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 111.

⁷¹⁷ Idem, p. 391.

well as the Arianiti rebellions against the establishment of the timar system, clearly showed that they had become a currency of plunder.

But, it will be the performance of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, who will stop this development in order to return Arbëria suddenly into history, and at the same time in a most magnificent way.

CHAPTER TWO GJERGJ KASTRIOTI – SKANDERBEG

THE KASTRIOTI AND ARBËRIA

The end of the Arianites, associated with the establishment of the timar system in Arbëria, although marking the end of Arbërian nobility, raised in the last two centuries under the circumstances when the central Byzantine government had open the way to powerful feudal lords and their autonomous government, though expropriated, did not finally remove from the scene some of the well-known Arbërian families, which, in the new circumstances, with various posts, were in some way kept connected with the Ottoman power.

Among these noble families was that of Gjon Kastrioti.

But who were the Kastriotis, appearing in historical sources rather later than many of the noble families of his time, mentioned as small feudal lords in the 1970s, sometimes perhaps earlier, and where did they come from?

The assessment that the Kastrioti family would have certainly remained unnoticed as other noble Arbërian families of the Middle Ages remained (with the exception of the Muzaka), if Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg had not come out of its bosom, seems to disparage many of the contradictions arising from various sources dealing with the genealogy of this family which requires to strike an often impossible balance between the reputation of the national hero and his ancestry, though this leaves open the question of explaining their surname, though recently this is also related to that of the village of Kastriot, located in the mountainous depths of Eastern Albania, 8 kilometers north of Peshkopia, in Lower Dibra, within the borders of the micro-province or the provincial community of Qidhnia, one of the nine “mountains” of the Dibra lands.⁷¹⁸

It is interesting that the village of Kastriot has been unknown to all historians who have dealt with Skanderbeg’s historiography.⁷¹⁹ This may have caused it to appear late as a possible argument, though as such finds support in practice since the Middle Ages when Arbërian nobles used the name of their early village as an adjective. This practice may have been used by the Kastriotis.⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ See Frashëri, Kristo: “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra”, Tiranë 2002, p. 54. On this occasion, the Albanian historian gives up some previous positions shown in “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, (“*History of the Albanian People*”), published in 1956.

⁷¹⁹ Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the village of Kastriot, as it was made known, in 1903, by a reader from Tirana of Konica’s magazine “Albania”, and a year later by the Russian consul, Jastrebov, in 1904, was unknown to historians.

⁷²⁰ See: “Albania”, London, 4/1903 and I. S. Jastrebov: “*Stara Srbija i Albanija*”, in “*Spomenik*” of Serbian Royal Academy, Beograd, Vol. XLI, 1904, pp. 123, 226-227.

Jirecek also talks about the practice of keeping two names, a first name that was rarely a national name, and an adjective that was that of his own tribe or village. He assesses that the surnames Kastrioti, Balsha, Muzaka, Araniti and Shpata are the names of villages that still exist in Albania.⁷²¹

Thus, the genesis of the Kastriotis from Dibra, as coming from a village of Mat (Shtjefën), mentioned by K. Frashëri,⁷²² is also supported by ethnographer Mark Krasniqi. He derives this position from the elaboration of many sources from the folk tradition, connecting the origin of Skanderbeg with the village of Kastriot in the district of Dibra. His father was came from there.⁷²³ The same stance can also be taken from Muzaka's "Memory".⁷²⁴

That the village of Kastriot and Great Dibra cannot be the only reference to the origin of the Kastriotis is also seen in the volatile attitude of the Albanian historians themselves from Tirana, who initially supported the view that the Kastriotis came from Kastrati, a village in Hasi of Kukës,⁷²⁵ claiming that the name of Kastriotis must have been Kastrat, if the Byzantine influence may have given it such a form.⁷²⁶

This conjecture has been followed by many other authors, who try to move the genealogy of the Kastrioti family from a village (Kastrati, or Kastrioti) to a wider environment than that of Dibra e Madhe or Hasi of Luma, connecting it to Epirus, but also to Macedonia and Mat as a broader historical definition from which attempts are made to see as deeply as possible the into the roots of its nobility, even beyond the appreciable historical arguments. With these views, equating Epirus with Macedonia as well as with Albania, Barleti,⁷²⁷ Bardhi⁷²⁸, Noli,⁷²⁹ and some other foreign authors, who mention *Ematia (ex Aemathia)*, which may also mean the province of Mat, despite the fact that in many cases it is also identified with ancient Macedonia, which as such is attributed to the identification of the crown of Skanderbeg.⁷³⁰

However, the complex and, for the most part, open-ended context of the Kastrioti family genealogy and its obscure extent in historical depth seems to be slightly shifted to a tangible reality by some archival acts dealing with the reflection of the real state of property owned by John Kastrioti, such as the villages of Radostushë and Trebishtin, located in the Dibra area,⁷³¹ indicates that Gjon Kastrioti, from external sources, mainly Venetian, emerges on the social and political scene as a powerful feudal lord from the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century,⁷³² precisely at the time of the great changes which followed after the decisive clashing of the Christians with the Ottomans in Dardania, when the fall of

⁷²¹ See: Jireček, K: "Forschungen", Vol. I, p. 70.

⁷²² Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 54.

⁷²³ Krasniqi, Mark: "Gjeneza Kastriote e disa fiseve shqiptare dhe malazeze sipas traditës popullore" ("The Kastrioti genesis of some Albanian and Montenegrin tribes according to popular tradition") in "Simposium on Skanderbeg", Prishtinë, 1969, pp. 265-266.

⁷²⁴ See Gj. Muzaka's Memoranda included in CH. Hopf: "Chroniques greco-romanes etc.", p. 301 and at Xhufi, Pëllumb: "Nga Paleologët te Muzakajt", Tiranë, 2009, pp. 365-457.

⁷²⁵ For more see "Historia e Shqipërisë", published by the University of Tirana in 1959, Vol. I. Along with K. Frashëri, this stance was also defended by A. Buda and in general the Albanian historiography of that time.

⁷²⁶ The etymological connection of Kastriot with Kastrati is defended by many foreign authors, among whom the most famous are: "Acta et Diplomata res Albaniae Mediae Aetatis Illustrantia etc", vol II, Wien, 1916, doc., no. 249; P. Luccari (*Capioso risteretto degli Anali di Rausa*) and L. Ugolini (*Pagine di storia veneta ai templi di Scanderbeg e de i suoi successon*); L.V Thalloscy - C. Jirecek: "Zwei Urkunden aus Nordalbanien", in "Archiv für Slawische Philologie", vol. XXI, Berlin, 1988, pp. 76-99, republished in "Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen", I Band München und Leipzig, 1916, p. 136; Jastrebov, I. S. E.: "Stara Srbija i Albanija", in "Spomenik" (Srpska Kraljevska Akademija), vol, XLI, Beograd, 1904, pp. 123, 126, 127; Fermedijin (*Acta Bosnae* in "Monumenta Historam Slavorum Meridionalium", vol. XXIII, Zagreb, 1892, republished in original by F. Noli: "Scanderbeg", New York, 1942).

⁷²⁷ Barleti, Marin: "Historia e Skënderbeut", Tiranë, p. 64.

⁷²⁸ Blancus, F: "Georgivs Castriotvs Epiensis vulgo Scanderbegh, Epiotarum Princeps etc." Venetiis, 1936, in Albanian: F. Bardhi: "Skënderbeu", translated by Stefan Prifti, Tiranë, 1957, p. 69.

⁷²⁹ Noli, S Fan: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu 1405-1468", Tiranë, 1967, p. 58.

⁷³⁰ See: Pope Callixtus III in 1475: *ac Macedoniae principem Skanderbeg* (to the Prince of Macedonia Skanderbeg); Johannes Jovinaus Pontanus: "Quod, ni ex Macedonia Georgius Castriotus, conomento Skander".

⁷³¹ See Hilandar's acts presented by K. Frashëri in "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra", Tiranë, 2002, p. 65.

⁷³² The first act speaking of John Kastrioti comes from the chancellery of Venice and has to do with the year 1406, making it clear that he was already a powerful "Lord" (ruler) in these parts. (Schmitt, Jens Olivier: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2009, p. 39).

some well-known noble families was followed by the establishment of some other hitherto unknown, or those switching between one or another pledge, taking advantage of the fall of one or the other.

Based on Muzaka's reports, it was Gjon Kastrioti who inherited only two villages from his father from Qidhma, who used these shocks to expand the entire territory of Dibra, which within a short time reached as far as its southern end, and eastwards as far as the castle of Sfetigrad.⁷³³

Based on Venetian documents, between the years 1406-1430, when he was finally defeated by the Ottoman forces of Murad II, Gjon Kastrioti enjoyed the authority of the Republic of Venice which regarded him as a powerful ruler, with whom relations should be maintained as much as possible, even though it was known that in the meantime he was in a state of vassalage to the Ottomans.⁷³⁴ This situation, that is, vassalage, was reconfirmed from time to time by Venice, receiving a message from the seniority saying that it was in his interest not to spoil the good relations with the sultan. Venice even claimed that when the time came to break off with the Turks, he would be welcomed in the possessions of the Republic and would be treated as its good and beloved son.⁷³⁵

The good "name" he enjoyed among the Venetians and the support given to him, which no doubt suited the Venetians for their interests in this important part of the Adriatic, can also be seen from a deposit of the Republic of Venice to the Pope to satisfy the request of the ambassador of Lord Gjon Kastrioti and the others "lords" of the lands of Arbëria (*ambadadoris domini Juani Castrioti et aliorum dominarum partium Albanie*).⁷³⁶

In fact, the promised Venetian citizenship to Gjon (John) will be granted in May 1413, as it would have been recognized in advance by Ragusa, whom he had sought, convinced that in this way he could find refuge from the storm that had begun after Mehmed's victory over the sons of Bayezid, whereby he would be proclaimed the sole sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Recognition of the citizenship of Venice for Gjon, a practice that the senator used for all feudal lords and other counts from Illyricum with whom he cooperated, but mostly used for his own interests, extended to all his sons and heirs (*Quod sibi civis venetiarum intus et extra, cum suis filiis et heredibus*).⁷³⁷

In these circumstances, in the Ottoman-Venetian relations, passing through open and sometimes secret alliances, however, the situation of Gjon Kastrioti was presented as a special indicator, not only on what he had to go through to benefit from as much as possible, but because of the limits, which had to constantly be taken into account, which could get one easily out of the game with inevitable consequences, as will happen in the case of the Venetian-Turkish war of 1428-1430, as Gjon Kastrioti, failing to meet the vassalage obligations to the sultan, such as those providing support with his soldiers, gave the Ottomans the impression that he had somehow taken the side of Venice.⁷³⁸

However, Gjon Kastrioti's position after his deep defeat by the army of Isaac bey Evrenos in the spring of 1430, when he was forced to accept humility in order to save before the sultan what could be saved, is an emblematic chapter, that of the beginning of the establishment and implementation of the timar regime in other parts of Arbëria, thus beginning the final phase of further expropriation of the Arbërian nobility and their downfall through the acceptance of the rules laid down by the Ottoman conqueror.

This change will be followed by the introduction of many of them into the system initially as Sipahis and Subases to the extent of the pashas and viziers. Those who will not

⁷³³ Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeut – jeta dhe vepra", Tiranë, 2002, p. 68.

⁷³⁴ Idem.

⁷³⁵ Idem, p. 79.

⁷³⁶ Idem, p. 68.

⁷³⁷ See: *Acta Albania Veneta*, X, no. 2280; Plasari, Aurel: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2010, p. 268.

⁷³⁸ For more see *Fetihname* (declaration of conquest) of Thessaloniki in 1430 at Feridun Bey: "Müseat üs-selatin", I, 200, in Pulaha: "Mbi gjendejn në vitet '20-'30", 117-120.

obey this rule, such as Zenevizi of Gjirokastra, who settled on the island of Corfu,⁷³⁹ or Nikollë Dukagjini of Danja, who sought refuge with many families in Shkodra, which was under the protection of Venice,⁷⁴⁰ they will be forced to leave the country, or seek refuge in the deep mountainous parts, where the Ottomans could not set foot.

Various records indicate that in 1431, Gjon's possessions, under the vassalage of the sultan and organized according to the timar regime appear in the Defter of the Sanjak Arnavud of 835 of Hijra, appearing under the name of "Yuvan". The timar regime, however, claims that only the province of Misia was temporarily excluded, which seems to have lost that statute eight years later,⁷⁴¹ but as such it will turn into an important reference to many events related to the emergence on the historical stage of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

The *Vilayeti Juvan-ili* (the Vilayet of the Gjon's lands, that is, of Gjon Kastrioti), was part of a large feudal-military administrative unit, called *Sanjak-i Arvanid* with its capital Gjirokastra, consisting of a large number of *kazas* and *nahiye*, among which were Kastrioti's possessions based in Rahonik, (medieval name of the city of Dibra), which was later included in the sanjak of Ohër.⁷⁴²

The acceptance of Ottoman vassalage by a section of Arbërian feudal lords, under the circumstances of the establishment of the timar regime according to the mufassal register, which started the establishment of military feudalism, was followed by numerous riots and uprisings, which, because the mufasal register had left out certain areas, such as the province of Misia of Kastrioti, necessarily included some of the sultan's vassals. In these circumstances, in 1434, Gjon Kastrioti is seen involved in the uprising in the fighting bellow the walls of Kruja.⁷⁴³

Although one learns from certain sources that this uprising was attributed to Andrea Thopia who had lost all his possessions, a close cooperation with Gjon is not ruled out, since after the uprising was put down, by order of the Sultan, Kastrioti was stripped of possession of the province of Misia, whereby it turned into an "independent" military feud (meaning the Arvanid Sanjak), not of a lower rank (*timar*), but rather of a higher rank (*zeamet*).⁷⁴⁴

The Misia *Nahiye*, as independent, however, set a special circumstance - that of being ruled by a Turkish soldier, which the locals did not accept, demanding that at its head again be a Kastrioti, a "confusion" taking on dimensions of an aggravation that threatened another uprising, which will be "calmed down" by the fact that the son of Gjon Kastrioti, Skanderbeg, will report to the Sanjakbey Mustafa.

Skanderbeg's appearance to the Sanjakbey of Ohër, Mustafa, as a timar sipahi, demanding that he be charged with the duty of a *zaim* of the province of Misia, however, highlights the fact that in 1435-1437 he could have been a sipahi in a timar of the territory of Dibra. This is mentioned by many historians relying on some evidence from Ottoman authors such as Ashik Pasha-zade and Saad-ed-Din, who report that Skanderbeg was appointed by the sultan as his father's heir, who was granted a "vilayet", though not specifying whether it was "Gjon's Vilayet", in the size of his possessions as a vassal, or the "Vilayet of Misia", which included a small part of them.⁷⁴⁵

⁷³⁹ See notes of L. Kalkolondil at K. Bozhari "Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shekullin XV. Burime bizantine", Tiranë, 1967, pp. 47-48.

⁷⁴⁰ See: "Dokumente rreth kryengritje shqiptare kundër pushtimit osman në vitet 30 të shek. XV", in: "Studime historike", no. 1/1967, pp. 147-162.

⁷⁴¹ See: "Hicri 835 Suret-i Defter-i Sancat-i Arvanid", p. 120; and Inhalçık, H: "Arnavuluk'ta Osmanli Hakimiyetinin yerlesmisi ve Iskendr bey isyaninin mensei", Ankara, 1954, p. 675.

⁷⁴² Idem.

⁷⁴³ See: Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra", Tiranë, 2002, p. 115.

⁷⁴⁴ Pulaha, S: "Mbi gjendjen në vitet 20-30 të shek. XV në tokat shqiptare" ("On the situation in the years 20-30 of the 15th century in Albanian lands"), in "Studime historike", no. 4/1970, pp. 111-157.

⁷⁴⁵ See: Kramers, J.H: "Encyclopedia of Islam", vol. III, Leyden, 1936, faqe 466; Noli, Fan Stilian: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë 1957.

This ambiguity becomes even greater by adding the data related to the appointment of Skanderbeg by the Sultan's Subase of Kruja of Kruja, a higher degree than that of the *zaim* of Misia, implying also the "bey" title, which came to Skender together with the appointment of the ruler of Kruja.⁷⁴⁶

Skanderbeg's contemporary, R. Volaterranus, announces that immediately after the death of Gjon Kastrioti, Sultan Murad handed over the paternal kingdom to Skender.⁷⁴⁷

This announcement and some others of this nature, moreover, opens the issue of Gjon Kastrioti's death, which according to the preliminary note related to that of his appointment by Sultan Murad as Subase of Kruja with a "bey" title, he must have died in May 1437.⁷⁴⁸

It is, however, another notice from Venice, dated 28 March 1438, concerning the request by Gjon Kastrioti to the Republic of Venice for its citizenship for his sons. Since the Venice document is accompanied by other data, this has been enough for some historians to come to a "compromise" between Ottoman and Western sources, in which case Gjon Kastrioti is said to have died after 28 March 1438 and before March 15, 1439.⁷⁴⁹

The uncertainty of Gjon Kastrioti's death will be followed by another ambiguity, which has to do with the time of Skanderbeg's *Subaslik* in Kruja, which must have started sometime in the summer of 1437 to end in October 1438, since in the defter of Kruja records as a Subase a certain Hazir bey, who had been a subase even before Skanderbeg's appointment.⁷⁵⁰

It is about five years, which complete the time until the Nish war of 1443, when Skanderbeg will finally break away from the Sultan, years that must answer all those with whom Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg will magnificently go down in history.

These years, however, do not seem to have been quiet, as according to Noli in 1438 a "new turn" was underway,⁷⁵¹ which according to many Ottoman sources had to do with the projection of an anti-Turkish uprising by Gjon Kastrioti and his son, which is directly attributed to "Iskander", i.e. Skanderbeg,⁷⁵² although the Ottoman sources are the ones that in terms of Skanderbeg's direct participation in the uprisings of 1438/9, appear with much contradiction, with many of them describing the Ottoman battles and victories, but not as being led by Skanderbeg. There are even some other sources which make it clear that from 1438-1443, he occasionally served in other parts, such as Syria (Sham)⁷⁵³ and Nicopolis (Bulgaria),⁷⁵⁴ never cutting off his ties with the homeland, a claim ruled out by some Albanian historians, who defend the position that Skanderbeg did not leave Arbëria, but rather remained there in the position of the Subase of Dibra.⁷⁵⁵

However, the years 1438-1443, which mark the time of Skanderbeg's departure from the sultan and his revolt against him, are related to an important event of the time: the Ferrara-Florence Convention, the decree issued by him for "unification of the churches" and plans for

⁷⁴⁶ See notifications by Ashik Pasha-Zade, Mehmed Neshtri, Rustem Pasha included in the work of K. Frashëri: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 118.

⁷⁴⁷ See: "Commentarium Urbanorum Duodequadragina", Romae, Joannes Besicken Alemanus, 1506.

⁷⁴⁸ See: Stojanović, Lj: "Stari Srpski zapisi i natpisi", Beograd, 1902, p. 87; Dujčev, Ivan: "Giorgio Castriota Scanderbeg nella letteratura slava contemporanea", in "V Convegno Internazionale di Studi Albanesi", Palermo, 1968. Aktti 1969, pp. 247-257.

⁷⁴⁹ See Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, p. 119.

⁷⁵⁰ Idem, p. 120.

⁷⁵¹ See Noli, Fan S: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 1957, pp. 80-83.

⁷⁵² For more see at Plasari, Aurel: "Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2010, p. 292, announcements by Hoca Sadeddin for the year 842 AH (June 14, 1438 - June 3, 1439) mentioning the uprising of "bastard Iskender", who "blinded by pride erred in his way by extending his hand towards the Islamic lands of those frontiers".

⁷⁵³ For Skanderbeg's temporary stay in Sham (Syria) as a sanjak-bey see Sh. Sami-bey Frashëri in "Kamus al-a'Lam" (voice – Skanderbeg before 1443).

⁷⁵⁴ Shuteriqi, Dhimitër: "Dy dokumente të kohës së Skënderbeut", in "Drita", 25 January 1965.

⁷⁵⁵ More about Skanderbeg's stay during the years 1438-1443 as Subase in Dibra, see Frashëri, Kristo: "Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu", Tiranë, 2002, pp. 120-124; Pulaha, S: "Mbi gjendjen në vitet '20-'30 të shekullit XV në tokat shqiptare dhe mbi qëndrimin e klasës feudale kundrejt pushtimit osman" ("On the situation in the '20s-'30s of the 15th century in Albanian lands and on the attitude of the feudal class towards the Ottoman occupation"), in Studime Historike, Tiranë 4/1970, pp. 136-141.

the Christian countries to prepare a common crusade against the Ottomans not only to prevent their penetration into Europe that had long since begun and to move quickly, but also to liberate the countries in Asia conquered by them. The decree issued by that Council, signed on July 5, 1439 by Pope Eugene IV, the Byzantine Emperor, Joan VII Palaeologus, Patriarch of Constantinople, Joseph, and Bishop of Nicaea, Visarion (Bessarione), in addition to the “union of churches” provides for restoration of the Roman Empire through which to expel the “infidels” from Europe and those parts of Asia that once belonged to the Empire.⁷⁵⁶

This could be an additional and very significant moment that may have influenced Skanderbeg to turn even more devotedly to the war against the Ottoman Empire, as something that belonged to all Western civilization, a war that could only be fought if supported by all of those who were able to finally unite against a common enemy.

SKANDERBEG AND THE BEGINNINGS OF WAR AGAINST OTTOMANS

The life and deeds of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, son of a feudal lord of Arbëria, Gjon Kastrioti, ruler of Kruja, who within a short time had changed the cross three times, from Orthodox to Catholic and vice versa, speaks of one of the most important epochs of the history of the Albanian people in general in the long struggle for national and state identity, closely linked to the testimony of Western Christian identity and its affiliation to the circumstances and space of what in the old continent will be spiritually reflected as a clash of civilizations, and in the political one, the boundary of the West-East spheres of interest of geostrategic proportions.

Indeed, if it were not be the turn of a young military man – leaving this post of glory to return to the service of his homeland, but also to what will soon be a protective dam in the fight against Ottoman incursions - surely the life and work of a military man named Skanderbeg, who, thanks to extraordinary successes, soon rose to the top of the Empire’s military hierarchy, no matter how high it would end, would remain within the framework of the natural, like many others, as part of the history of the Ottoman Empire.

Precisely because Skanderbeg abandoned a battle in the service of the Ottoman Empire, that of Nish in 1443, led by the Hungarian John (Janosh) Hunyadi, which was taking place in the western area (in Dardania), where he came from, to return to the homeland and will do so by entering into war with the greatest Empire of the time, in which he was raised, this will represent that great historical turn that will elevate him to the national hero of the Albanians and to an unprecedented symbol so far, in the war against the Ottoman Empire.

This came at a time when the West was engulfed in a general panic and, for the most part, was thinking of how to choose the most appropriate means of deception to stop them without going to anyone who intended to engage in a joint defensive war against them, which will at the same time turn into a struggle for the defense of Western Christian civilization to be rightly regarded as one of the most important and powerful of the time. .. And in those circumstances of great anxiety, after the failed Council of Ferraro-Florence of 1439 about a common church that would lead the anti-Ottoman war the bells of the church of Notre Dame in Paris marked only the losses of battles by the Ottomans on various fronts, all of a sudden the mortuary ringing will turn into that of triumphs from the news that came from an almost obscure castle to Europe, called Kruja. There the Ottoman flag is removed and replaced with the double-headed eagle of the door of the Kastriotis. It will not be long before that that flag

⁷⁵⁶ For more on the Council of Ferrara-Firenca, see: “*Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium spec. XV etc*” and Erhard: “*Geschichte des Wiederaufblühens*”.

will become for more than a quarter of a century a symbol of the state of Arbëria, and also a symbol of hope for Western Christianity in the fight against Ottoman and Islamic penetrations on the old continent.

Was Skanderbeg and the historical turning point, in those circumstances really a measured action that was rather patriotic of a glorious military man of imperial proportions in the service of his debt to the homeland, already enslaved like the rest of the southeastern countries of the old continent that together had fallen under the green flag, to which the ruined throne needed to be restored - an action that would then, from the outside, be compared to that of the "Saviour Angel of Christianity", as some of the chroniclers of the time would put it, without hesitation comparing him with the prophets and the like?⁷⁵⁷ ..

Or, was it an expected action of an Arber with deep patriarchal convictions, which neither being raised to the highest military post, nor the fame and splendor of an empire, among the most powerful of the time in the world, holding its throne over three continents, nor the fondling by the sultan and others will not be able to heal from his vengeful patriarchal "code", so that one day he will take revenge on the one who had despised his family and homeland?⁷⁵⁸

Laying out these uncertainties is right, despite the assessment that this is a stable and large monument of internal and external dimensions, both national and international, which has successfully withstood the test of time and that of history almost alone, for he came where he was not expected and because he was not repetitive. Therefore, precisely as such and with this oriole, the confrontation with his work represents more than a re-reading of a glorious era, which must always be examined and reconsidered in order to be understood and interpreted in accordance with what that impulse was, both internal as well as external, and what were those decisive factors that will give strength to his behavior with which the great and similar turn will be put into action, instead of remaining only an inspiring image constantly producing pride.

The opening of this view may inevitably highlight the assessment that Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, as a personality, had the ideal of greatness and the will of power, which can only be found in rare people, being guided and remaining faithful until ultimately, in the service of an equally lofty goal of living, which can all be linked to the creation of a new western center of resistance in his homeland in line with the spirit that the Ferrara-Florence Council had aroused, as the "Council of Union" of churches (Rome and Constantinople), a center that had many of the necessary preconditions for such a thing.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁷ About the life and work of the national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu, only during his life, by European authors and chroniclers, in different languages, dozens of works of different genres had been written. Among them are those reaching the degree of apotheoses. Later, numerous studies and chronicles will appear, where Skanderbeg continues to be recognized for his merits as a defender of Christianity and the like, with his Arberian affiliation not forgotten. In the nineteenth century, at a time when Serbian hegemonic propaganda would try to destroy the history of the western affiliation of Albanians and the contribution of Albanians in its defense, they would try to appropriate Skanderbeg, trying to present him sometimes as Montenegrin, sometimes Bosnian, and at times even Macedonian! But, these speculations remained without any echo either in the historical or political plain.

⁷⁵⁸ The "thesis" that Skanderbeg, as he abandoned the battle of Nish and returned to Albania, allegedly had no other goals than those of revenge, *related to the Albanian tribal mentality of revenge, similar to that of the outlaws*, was thrown in by the Swiss historian, Oliver Jens Schmitt, in his book "*Skënderbeu*", published in Albanian, in Tirana, in 2009. It is a study of monographic claims, translated by Ardian Klosi, not published in German. Schmitt also puts forward a thesis that Skanderbeg was a vassal of Naples and a subject of Venice and many other suspending hypotheses, or constructs appearing detached from second-hand and similar documents and sources. The book was criticized by some Albanian historians, including Kristo Frashëri and his book "*Skanderbeg disfigured by a Swiss historian and some Albanian analysts*", dedicated to this issue. Attempts of this nature to damage the image of Skanderbeg are not new. There have been similar ones in the past. One of the authors who was and remains inspiring in this regard and might have probably served Schmitt as well, is the eighteenth-century English historian Edward Gibbon and his work, "*History of the Decline and Fall Roman Empire*", published in London in 1900, who among other things speaks with contempt for Skanderbeg for "*he started his career as a traitor and deserter to Sultan Murat II*" and the like, with which Fan S. Noli will deal extensively in his history of Skanderbeg, "George Kastrioti Skanderbeg", published in Boston, in 1947, and translated and published in Albanian, in Albania, in 1967.

⁷⁵⁹ The *Council of Ferrara-Florence* was held in 1439 in Florence under the call of Pope Eugene IV under the motto "council of union". The council was attended by Pope Eugene IV himself, the Byzantine Emperor John VII Palaeologus with his brother Demetrius, the patriarch of Constantinople Joseph, the bishop of Nicaea Visarion (Bessarione), as well as many clergy and representatives of all other Eastern patriarchates. In Florence on July 5, 1439, after a long debate of several

This sublime goal will even be pointed out by many scholars and important personalities of the time dealing with him, including the war against the Ottomans and the efforts to create the state of Arbër together with the commitment of the one who should take over the role of defenders of Western civilization and Christianity, being seen in his service.

In addition to these observations, which have already become inevitable stereotypes, Skanderbeg's life and deeds embody another one - that of the idea of relocating the already declining castle of Constantinople from the shores of the Bosphorus, where the Dardanian-Illyrian Emperor Constantine the Great had placed it ten centuries ago, with the conviction that this new center in Kruja would continue the fame of the former Troy, so that from there not only protect the capital of the Empire, but in the spirit of the Ferrara-Florence Council the unification of the churches and the west around a common anti-Ottoman war, even to turn it into a new Rome, from where the Christian West will be able to withstand the Ottoman attacks so that one day it will even return to where it was.

Although about the Skanderbegian concept that Kruja and Arbëria as "New Rome" would turn into a new bastion of world Christianity, which would replace Constantinople, which had begun to capitulate to Islam due to lack of any statement or plan to be announced then or later, it seems an illusion, yet it is precisely the stereotypes known about Skanderbeg's life and deed that we have become accustomed to encountering so far, which may pave the way for an opinion that Skanderbeg may have been led by the idea of relocating Constantinople to Arber land (in Kruja) as a real possibility that in the war with the Ottomans Arbëria of a new missionaryism (he not by accident called it Epirus and Macedonia), to turn into a "castle", where the west will join after the fall of Constantinople.

Although his return to his homeland and the war he declared against the Ottoman Empire were not outside the idea that the castle of Byzantium, Constantinople, as the "new Rome" would be moved from the Bosphorus to Arbëria (Kruja), this idea should be taken into account, although it breaks the stereotypes of the current assessments on Skanderbeg as a national and European hero, and as a "Knight of Christianity" and the like, while giving a different meaning to the history of that time. However, it is necessary to go through the circumstances the boy named Gjergj Kastrioti passed from the time of being kept hostage to his release, a time not so long, though very congested in terms of developments, where the key factor influencing his action, which will take on the dimensions of a great historical turn, with the idea of turning Arbëria into a "new Rome", to replace the collapsing Byzantium, is not excluded.

SKANDERBEG AND ARBËRIA'S RETURN

Skanderbeg's return to Arbëria in 1443, after withdrawing from the battle of Nis, allowing the Hungarian army of Hunyadi defeat the Ottomans, and the beginning of the general uprising he proclaimed, brought about significant changes in the political process of history of Arbëria, which resumed the path of the process of formation of the united Arbërian

months, the historic decree of the "union" of the Churches was signed. The decree was read publicly in the cathedral church of Florence. Drafted simultaneously in Latin and Greek, in addition to the union of the churches, the decree foresaw also the restoration of the Roman Empire through which the expulsion of "infidels" from Europe and to those parts of Asia Minor that once belonged to the Empire. (More on this union see: "Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium spec. XV etc."; Erhard: "Geschichte des Wideraufbliünes"; Cecconi: "Storia del Concilio, I (Antecedenti)"; Hefe: "Historie des conciles"; Chiaroni: "La stisma greco e il Concilio di Firenze"; Geanokopulos: "The Cuncil of Florence"; Gill: "Eugenius IV: Pope of Christian Union" and "The Council of Florence, Firenze e il concilio del 1439"; "Christian Unity. The Council of Ferrara-Florence"; Chitarin: "Greci e latini al Concilio di ferrara-Firenze"; B. De la Bronquiere: "Voyage d'outre mer", Paris, 1895, etc.)

state, which would include the space of the three ancient kingdoms: Macedonian, Epirotes and the Dardanians, which the Ottoman occupation had interrupted half a century ago.⁷⁶⁰

The beginning of the resumption of this process, as a circumstance, became the successful uprising of November 1443. While, as an institution, the “Albanian League of Lezha” of March 1444 was used.⁷⁶¹

The “Albanian League of Lezha”, taken as the basis for the establishment of Skanderbeg’s state, was not a “Union of Princes”,⁷⁶² but rather an alliance of lords, nobles, and well-known heads of families or provinces. The gentry took on the burden of helping the liberation war with army and money, though keeping for themselves their feudal rights in their particular their possessions. They kept their armies and castles. The same thing happened with the leaders of the highlands (or *mountains*, as mountainous provincial communities were called at the time), which would help the war only with human power, while they continued to govern their territories according to local customary law.⁷⁶³ It goes without saying that they reserved the right to leave without any punishment or consequence.⁷⁶⁴

So, in Lezha, Skanderbeg was elected president of the League *only* as far as the joint war against the Ottoman Turks was concerned. He was a feudal lord only in his own possession and commander of the of the League army only during the war. Within the League there was only one “*primus inter pares*” (*first among equals*).⁷⁶⁵

As the war deepened, this situation was no longer conducive to responding to new tasks. The particularistic power of the nobles, the right to immunity they enjoyed, the rivalries between them and the greed to seize lands in neighboring possessions, were obstacles to the further development of the war, which required a mobilization of all human and material resources of the country. This mobilization could only take place with a concentration of political power.⁷⁶⁶

On the contrary, the independence of action and the right to leave the Albanian League, as would happen in 1447 with the departure of Pjetër Spani and Gjergj Dushmani from it at the time of the conflict with Venice, was a permanent threat to Skanderbeg. This danger became even greater when the oscillating attitude of the gentry was encouraged by the Ottomans and exploited by the Venetians, such as the attitude of the powerful nobles Gjergj Arianiti and Dukagjini.⁷⁶⁷

But it will be Skanderbeg’s important victories, especially those he reaped against Sultan Murad II at the walls of Kruja, with which he repaid the loss he had suffered two years before in Sfetigrad, which began to increase his prestige in the broad masses of the population, while the gentry, who joined the Sultan during the Kruja campaign, began to be seen as traitors. Even the prestige was falling on the gentry: Dukagjini, Arianiti and Muzaka, who almost stood aside in the face of the bloody clashes taking place with the Turks in the vicinity of their possessions.⁷⁶⁸

Of course, in these circumstances, as some of the nobles were watching by, some others were using two spoons, and there also those who had sided with the Ottomans, Skanderbeg had to “violate” a part of the agreement of the Albanian League of Lezha, especially the part dealing with the passage of the particularistic power of the feudal nobles. This enterprise began with the organization of the army, which would be able to withstand extremely difficult challenges.

⁷⁶⁰ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 176.

⁷⁶¹ Idem, p. 176.

⁷⁶² Fan Noli: “*Vepra*”, 4, 1947, p. 66.

⁷⁶³ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 176.

⁷⁶⁴ Luarasi, A: “*Shteti dhe e drejta shqiptare në shtetin e Skënderbeut*” (“*Albanian state and law in the state of Skanderbeg*”), Tiranë, 1998, pp. 128-130.

⁷⁶⁵ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 177.

⁷⁶⁶ Idem, p. 177.

⁷⁶⁷ Idem, p. 177.

⁷⁶⁸ Idem, p. 177.

Many authors, including his biographers (Barleti), report that Skanderbeg from 1447, when the first cracks began in the Albanian League of Lezha, from which he split four years later, gathered an army of about 15 thousand soldiers, 3,000 of whom were personal guards, chosen fighters and ready for the most difficult battles. This meant professional development and adaptation to the circumstances of the war, which were extremely challenging when it came to fighting a powerful enemy, among the most powerful in the world, which had great military potential and also abundant armament, able to bring enforcements according to needs. Since Skanderbeg's army, formed on the basis of the decision of the Assembly of Lezha, had a federal character and was not able to deal with the Ottoman elite units, prepared for long fighting, Skanderbeg considered it necessary to organize a new kind of army.⁷⁶⁹

As a military man who had enlisted in the Ottoman army and knew its military art very well, Skanderbeg set to work to train the forces he had, to be able to, accordingly, fight the enemy, implementing a strategy known for partisan warfare, surprise attacks and retreats. Thus, in general, Skanderbeg's army was divided into two parts: permanent army, including the Praetorian Guard, which was dominated by cavalry, lightly armed, which was very mobile and ready for unpredictable actions.

In addition, Skanderbeg also had an auxiliary army, consisting of squadrons of peasants, who mobilized whenever Skanderbeg called them. Their task was to attack the rear of the Ottoman army, to close the roads by means of traps, damage the caravans that supplied the enemy with food and weapons.⁷⁷⁰

Volunteers from the free provincial communities usually participated in the auxiliary army, based on the "a man per home" principle. At the end of the fighting, the members of these detachments returned to their homes, where they worked the land with plows, carrying with them weapons, ready to respond to Skanderbeg's call.⁷⁷¹

Military personnel (officers) had no ranks. They were called captains, from the Latin *capitanes*. They were divided into two categories: commanders of large formations, called Skanderbeg's captains (*kapedanë*), and simple captains, who depended on Skanderbeg's captains.⁷⁷²

Some of the later historians, who use the sources of the archives of the time, especially those of Ragusa, the Papacy, and Venice, estimate that Skanderbeg's army had no more than 6,000 troops ready for war, while the rest were absorbed, as needed, by volunteers, who came from different feuds of the country, while the command system also underwent changes, which made it more successful.⁷⁷³

One of these measures was the one that began with the replacement of captains who came from the ranks of shaky young feudal lords, who were subject to military discipline and command in accordance with the demands of the commander-in-chief, who also had military advisers from abroad, helping his army be as prepared as possible for the battle. In this regard, he violated feudal immunity, removed the incompetent or suspicious aristocrats, not only stripping them of their offices, but making the possessions of weak feudal lords, such as those of Thopia, Stresi, Muzaka, Gropa and others, dissolved or "annexed" to Skanderbeg's Arbërian principality.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁶⁹ Idem.

⁷⁷⁰ Idem, p. 193.

⁷⁷¹ Barleti, Marin: "Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra", Prishtinë, 1968.

⁷⁷² Franco, Demetri: "Commentario dell Cose dei Turchi e del Signor Giorgio Scanderbeg", Venetia, 1539. It contains: Moisi of Dibra *capitno di Scanderbeg* (p. 20), or Muzak Thopia *cognato et capitano suo (his brother-in-law or captain)*, p. 19, or Moisi and Gjurica *sui capitani* (p. 9). Skanderbeg himself was charged by the Assembly of Lezha with the duty of General Captain *capitano generale di tutti li altri*, namely Chief Captain (p. 9).

⁷⁷³ For more see: Fallmerayer, Ph: "Das Albanesische Element in Griechenland", München, 1860, p. 9; Jovius, P: "Sub effigie Georgii Castrioti Scanderbeschi", in "Elogia virorum", Basileu, 1561; Franco, D: "Commentario dell cose de Turchi et del s: Geogio Scanderbeg, principe di Epyrro", Venetia, 1539. Gegaj, Athanas: "L'Albani et L'Invasions Turque au XV siecle", Paris, 1937.

⁷⁷⁴ For more see: Muzaka, Gjon: "Historia e Genealogija e Shpis së Muzakajve e shkrue prej zotni Gjon Muzakës, Princ i Epirit" ("History and Genealogy of the Muzakaj House written by Mr. Gjon Muzaka, Prince of Epirus", in "Leka" review,

As a result, the former boundaries of feudal possessions slowly turned into administrative boundaries, and the isolated possessions extended from time to time into a single state. This process thus led to the creation of a united Arbërian state.⁷⁷⁵

The expropriation of feudal lords and aristocrats, often violent and the employment of a loyal military stratum against the Commander-in-Chief, who took full responsibility for leading the successful war, naturally provoked the displeasure of the nobles, who sought to maintain their power relying on the right of the feud, regardless of how it expanded. This resulted in the defection of some of the feudal lords from the Albanian League of Lezha and their rapprochement with Venice, Naples, even with some ready to take side with the Ottomans. Contrary to these circumstances, as Skanderbeg had become an undisputed authority and had taken over almost all affairs, the Albanian League of Lezha almost lost all its meaning. Its place was taken by the *State of Arbëria*, which came growing and strengthening until it increasingly took on the character of a centralized state.⁷⁷⁶

But what were the true dimensions of Skanderbeg's state? And how much was he recognized and accepted from abroad? Along with this goes the issue of its identification with Skanderbeg or Skanderbeg's with it. The differentiation of this issue is of great importance, as it also highlights the attitude that others had towards this issue and the character of Skanderbeg's war in relation to it.

Skanderbeg's state, that is, the Arbërian state, in 1451, lay only in a space that included the provinces of Central Albania, to which, in order to extend further, it needed to include the possessions of the Dukagjinis and Arianites remaining, which not coincidentally he would be called the king of Epirus and Macedonia. The Dukagjinis, despite some conciliatory signs (of Lekë), never became part of Skanderbeg's state. On the contrary, they made peace with the Sultan, and frequently acted against Skanderbeg.⁷⁷⁷

With Gjergj Arianiti, Skanderbeg had a fragile approach, as in April 1451 he married Donika (Andronika), his daughter.⁷⁷⁸ But after a while Arianiti broke up again, after connecting with Venice. After his death (1461) the possessions were dissolved in Skanderbeg's state.

According to detached data and sources of the time, the borders of Skanderbeg's state, at the height of its heyday, extended to the West, on the shores of the Adriatic, from Velipoja to Seman (with the exception of the cities of Lezha and Durres); in the East they reached beyond the Black Drin, to the mountains of Korab, Kërçin, and Stagova, together with the Radika Gorge; in the North they were limited to the possessions of the Dukagjinis, approximately to the northern borders of the province of Mat; in the South, they included the former possessions of the Arianites and the Muzaka, that is, some of the spaces of the three ancient kingdoms, Macedonia, Epirus, and Dardania, which were symbolized not only by its helmet, but also by its seal and political vision. On the coast the state of Skanderbeg had two ports with fortified walls (castles). One was the aforementioned port of Cape Rodan (once Shufadaya) near the mouth of the Ishmi River.

Shkodër, 1932. Among other things, it said: "*Skanderbeg, after becoming the Commander of the lords of Albania ... decided to seize the whole country; he imprisoned Messrs. Gjon and Gjin Balsha (his nephew by his sister, Jella) and took their state that was between Kruja and Lezha... To Lord Mosi Komneni he took the state he had in Dibër ... And after my father died, he took us Tomorica, that is, Little Mycenae, and also took from the other lords, the place of Komnenos and Rancis, but they had nothing to do, because he had the army in his hands. and they had Turku on top every hour... And after my father died, he took us Tomorica, that is, Little Myzeqea, and also took from the other lords, the place of Komnenos and Rancis, but they could do nothing, because he had an army in his hands. and they had the Turk on top every hour ...*"

⁷⁷⁵ Frashëri, Kristo: "*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 179.

⁷⁷⁶ Luarasi, A: "*Shteti dhe e drejta shqiptare në shtetin e Skënderbeut*", Tiranë, 1998, p. 130.

⁷⁷⁷ Frashëri, Kristo: "*Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*", Tiranë, 2002, p. 180.

⁷⁷⁸ Barleti calls her *Donika*, while Gjon Muzaka in his Memorandum calls her *Andronika* and adds that she was the first daughter of Gjergj Arianiti. In the archival documents of 1469 of the Aragonese chancellery in Naples, Skanderbeg's wife is called *Donika*, while in the tomb of her nephew, Bishop Constantine in Naples, she is mentioned as *Andronica (Andronica Cominata)*. Dhimitër Frëngu, who knew her personally, calls her *Donika (quella bellissima et virtuosissima figliola di Arianit Comina che si chiamava Donica)*.

These, then, were more or less the dimensions of the state of Arbëria during the time of Skanderbeg, whose name, however, will spread into the world remaining a historical reference among the most enduring related to the Arbërian state, identified with Skanderbeg and his war, a state that had the features of a feudal monarchy, without a monarch, but with a “Lord” who despotically led it.

But, what was the title of its creator?

In Skanderbegian historiography there is confusion about his title as head of state.⁷⁷⁹

Marin Barleti calls Skanderbeg “Prince of Epirotans” (*Epirotarum Princeps*).⁷⁸⁰ Dhimitër Frangu, calls him in 1539 “Prince of Epirus” (*principe di Epyrro*). Frang Bardhi in 1636, “Prince of Epirotans” (*Epirotaurum Princeps*). Perhaps under Barleti’s influence, Skanderbeg was also called a Prince by many foreign historians.⁷⁸¹

As in the official European acts addressed to Skanderbeg and the letters he signed, he is not called neither a *prince*, nor *king*, *master*, but simply “lord”. So in Latin acts: *dominus*; in Italian: *sinor*; in Spanish: *senyor*; in Slavic: *gospodin*. Thus, from a letter he received from Alfonso V, king of Naples, on December 14, 1447, Skanderbeg was called “the lord of Kruja and the provinces of Arbëria” (*Domine Croi provinciarum que Arbanie*).

Skanderbeg was also called the King of Epirus, Albania and Macedonia. For him, Epirus and Macedonia represented the center of the medieval Albanian kingdom with roots in antiquity.⁷⁸²

This is of particular importance, since the identification with these kingdoms, among the most famous of antiquity, especially with Macedonian known as a world empire, complemented the idea of restoring Arbëria to an important center that would unite the two poles of Western civilization: east and west, especially in circumstances where their space had already been forcibly separated by the Ottomans threatening to separate them forever.

Despite these claims that Skanderbeg nourished about the role of Arbëria in the new surroundings and the universal western missionary work of his war as the only means for its realization, which must be taken into account and even treated, his first and natural allies never wanted Skanderbeg and his crown to be treated with the epithet of the King of Epirus and Macedonia. Moreover, unlike Naples, the Republic of Venice, in the peace treaty it signed with Skanderbeg on October 4, 1448, did not grant him any official title *de jure*, although *de facto* treated him as a representative of the Arbërian chiefs. The reasons why Venice did this are well known. The Republic of the Sea had well-known agreements with the Ottoman Empire on the possession of the coast of Arbëria, which were increasing or decreasing depending on the successes of Skanderbeg’s war in relation to the Ottomans.

But even Skanderbeg will behave in accordance with the successes he reaped on the battlefields. Thus, after the victory on the walls of Kruja over Murad II, in the autumn of 1450, he calls himself “Lord of Kruja” (*dominus Croie*), or “Arbërian Lord” (*dominus albanensis*), or (*sinor in Albania*) and not “Lord of Arbëria” (*dominus Arbanie*). In the summer of 1451, Skanderbeg came out with the official title “*Lord of Arbëria*” (*Dominus Albaniae*). A month later, the Duke of Milan addresses Skanderbeg with the new title “*Lord of Albania*”. Skanderbeg used this official title until the end of his life. With this title he was

⁷⁷⁹ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 188.

⁷⁸⁰ Barleti, Marin: “*Historia e Skënderbeut*”, Prishtinë, 1986, p. 46.

⁷⁸¹ For more see: P. Jovi (1551), F. Cunberti (1898). Some call Skanderbeg “*King of Arbëria*” (*Roy d’Alanie*), as for example, J. De Lavardin (1576) or “*King of Albania*” as Cl. C Moore (1850) calls him. This could have influenced our revivalists in general and Naim Frashëri in particular to think that Skanderbeg had been the “king” of Albania, as he describes him in the poem dedicated to the hero (1899). Also, Fan Noli, in his first work dedicated to the Hero in 1921, called Skanderbeg “*King of Albania*”, while in the 1950 edition he simply named him “*Chief of Arbëria*”. According to Kristo Frashëri, who excludes Skanderbeg being called “Chieftain”, because in the state of Skanderbeg there were no vassal nobles, neither before nor after 1450, he could have supported it from a letter of Skanderbeg addressed to Prince Feranti G. A Orsini, on October 31, 1460, where he speaks of “my vassals” (*mili vassals*), which in this case means subordinate officials and not small feudal lords under the sovereignty or suzerain of a sovereign.

⁷⁸² See G. Raille, 1581: “Georgis Castriotis, is inquani a patre, Epiri que Albaniae, feu Macedoniae, principe, datur obfes Amurathi Turarum”.

addressed, after 1451, by almost all foreign chancelleries. Even the title “*dominus Albanie*” was fixed, through the DA initials placed on both sides of the double-headed eagle on the heraldic emblem.⁷⁸³

When it comes to stamps, in addition to the state one, with the initials DA and the double-headed eagle, which has become an emblem associated with the national flag and other symbols, Skanderbeg provided his own financial acts with a special stamp, which, for safety, held it in the form of a ring in his hand (*sigillum annulare*). Its traces are deposited in the bank of Ragusa. This type of ring seal had a secret character (*sigillum secretum*) and served as a kind of code between Skanderbeg and the Ragusa City Bank.⁷⁸⁴

In addition to internal governance, military and finance leadership, another factor influencing the consolidation of state power was the treatment of all residents and, in connection with it, equal treatment of the two Christian rites practiced in the Arbërian area (Catholics and Orthodox), which may be the reason for the assessment that “religion gave the Arbërians the unity they lacked in the state, as it also served as a link to unite with the West”.⁷⁸⁵

Indeed, Skanderbeg’s successful war against the Ottomans would not have been successful outside the ideological platform of the unification of the two Christian churches, proclaimed at the Council of Florence on July 5, 1439, when a decision was taken for renewed efforts to face the division of 1054, the frontier of which, directly strained over the lands of Arbëria, creating a frontier of war. In Florence, where Pope Eugene IV himself attended, the Byzantine Emperor John VII Palaeologus, along with his brother Demetrius, the Patriarch of Constantinople Josephus, the bishop of Nicaea, Visarion, and many other clergy and representatives, spoke much about this union of churches, which was solemnly proclaimed in the church of the Cathedral of Florence designed simultaneously in Latin and Greek, though the agreement had more to do with the plans to restore the Roman Empire by means of the slogan of expulsion of the “infidels” from Europe and up to those parts that once belonged to the Empire.⁷⁸⁶

Although evidently the unification of the churches will not take place, because in the East, that is, Byzantium, from 1402, the slogan of the Byzantine defeatists won: “*Better the Turk than the French!*”,⁷⁸⁷ which had its roots in the behavior of a section of the Orthodox clergy, who long saw the unstoppable strengthening of the Ottoman Empire and the penetration of Islam as an opportunity to avenge Catholicism in order to benefit, as had truly happened, however, were the Hungarians directly threatened by the Ottoman conquests, who would understand the spirit of the “unification” of the Council of Florence as a good opportunity to make efforts for a common war against the Ottomans.

There were even optimists, such as Giovano Torzelo, a high-ranking Byzantine official of Italian descent who was associated with the *Italics*, counting on the power of Arbëria in this war as very important, since according to him there were two masters who could raise 20,000 cavalry warriors and that also, as soon as they saw the coming of a Christian power, they would immediately turn against the Turk.⁷⁸⁸

If one can accept the assessment that the “Union Council” may have influenced Skanderbeg’s dismissal in 1440 (this is the post of subase he held in Kruja after the death of his father, Gjon Kastrioti),⁷⁸⁹ surely Skanderbeg will use the spirit of this “union” in the best possible way for the internal needs, that is, to remove the possibilities of all the divisions, which could turn into later obstacles. In fact, all the facts show that Skanderbeg used the

⁷⁸³ Frashëri, Kristo: “*Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 191.

⁷⁸⁴ Idem.

⁷⁸⁵ Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 43.

⁷⁸⁶ For more on this “union” see at Erhard: “*Geschichte des Wiederaufblühens*“, München, 1980.

⁷⁸⁷ Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 55.

⁷⁸⁸ Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, p. 296.

⁷⁸⁹ Inalxhik, Halil: “*Iskender Beg*”, in “*Enciklopedie de L’Islam*”, nouv, ed. Etc, Vol. II, Leyden, Paris ,1961.

council to strengthen the well-known trends that the Orthodox churches should also be connected with the church of Rome without cutting ties with Constantinople, a trend that had begun in the last quarter of the 13th century, when the Orthodox churches of the areas included in the “Kingdom of Arbëria” from Rubik to Himara, created by the French Catholic king of Naples, Charles I of Anjou, without changing the traditional Byzantine church rite.

Although this situation cannot be viewed outside the pressure of the political factor, such as that of the Anjou influence and the circumstances when the Arbërian lands were going through a forced change, which aimed to create the Eastern Latin Empire that collapsed in 1260, however, should not neglect the Arber factor - the major interest of the Arbërians, worried about the greed for land conquest towards the Adriatic of the Orthodox feudal lords of Rascia and their conviction that they could face this danger only with the support of the Anjou and not of the weak Orthodox Byzantines and, even more so, allies of the Slavs.⁷⁹⁰

Thus, one of the first Orthodox dioceses to be connected with Rome was the bishopric of Kruja, subordinated to the Orthodox Archdiocese of Durrës, under the auspices of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the time it first met at the Photiaan Council of Constantinople in 879 until mentioned for the last time in the list of eastern churches, in the Tacticon of Michael Paleologus, in 1282.⁷⁹¹

Similarly, some other Orthodox dioceses of the metropolis of Durrës, among which the Orthodox dioceses of Cërrik, Kunavia, Drishti, Pulti, Shkodra, and Tivar, are entirely wiped out from the ecclesiastical geography, are finally hidden from ecclesiastical geography, and some others turning to Rome associating themselves with the Holy See (the diocese of Stefaniaka in Lower Dibra *episcopus Stephaniensis*, the Bishopric of Lis in the province of Mat, the Bishopric of Pulheriopolis, and that of Vlora, which took the place of the Bishopric of Apollonia).⁷⁹²

The phenomenon of severing ties with Constantinople and the Holy See spread to most of the Arbërian lands, and this can be explained by the increased risk of Slavic occupation, especially after the conquests of Stefan Dušan in the first half of the 14th century, and with the fall of the Byzantine Empire, whose rule in Arbëria came to an end in the middle of the same century, whereby the Arbërians were convinced and hoped that their salvation could only come from the West.⁷⁹³

According to Farlati, the Arbërian view of Western Christianity is also explained by the fact that in the 15th century the ecclesiastical geography in Arbëria was to the benefit of the Roman Catholic Church with eighteen episcopal sees, some of which bear an unbroken history since the dawn of Christianity.⁷⁹⁴

Skanderbeg’s war must have strengthened these tendencies even more, to the extent that “every bishop was a fundraiser for Skanderbeg’s crusade; every calligrapher was a propagandist of his”.⁷⁹⁵

This may have prompted Noli to assess that “religion gave Albanians the unity they lacked as a state” which he said served as a link to unite with the West.⁷⁹⁶

Consequently, when Skanderbeg unfurled the flag of the liberation war, the ecclesiastical geography of Arbëria was presented in three colors: in the northern and northeastern areas, the Catholic Church prevailed, connected from the canonical, ritual, organizational and political point of view with Rome; in the central southern and southeastern provinces the Orthodox Church continued to rule, which, although weakened by the Ottoman occupation, maintained

⁷⁹⁰ Frashëri, Kristo: “Skënderbeu”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 185.

⁷⁹¹ At more length see: “Acta et Diplomata res Albaniae Mediale Aetis Illustrata”, vol I, Vienna, 1913, doc, no, 57; Farlati, D: “Illyricum Sacrum” m vol. VII, Venetis, 1817, p. 414.

⁷⁹² Idem.

⁷⁹³ Frashëri, Kristo: “Skënderbeu”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 186.

⁷⁹⁴ Farlati: “Illyrici sacri”, Vëll, VII, f.IX-XIV; Jireček, K: “Handelsstrassen und Bergwerke von Serbien und Bosnien wehrend des Mittelalters”, Prag, 1879, p. 16.

⁷⁹⁵ See Theiner: “Monumenta Slavorum”, vëll. I. Nr. DOVI, pp. 427-8.

⁷⁹⁶ Noli, Fan Stilian: “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu”, Tiranë 1967, p. 43.

in principle the canonical, ritual, organizational, and political ties with the Patriarchate of Constantinople appearing as a majority; while in the areas between them, the later so-called *uniata* churches prevailed, which respected the traditional Byzantine rite and liturgy, while from the organizational and political point of view they were related to the Holy Roman See.

Despite his preferences for the Holy Roman See, Skanderbeg stood and acted on these colors.⁷⁹⁷

This can even be best proved by the fact that in his ranks he had his associates, military commanders of three ecclesiastical colors - captains like Tanush Thopia (of the Catholic Church of Durres), Zakaria Gropa (of the Orthodox Church of Ohër), Kuka (of the *uniata* church of Stefaniaka). He also charged with diplomatic missions, not only the prelate of the Catholic rite, like the Angelos, but also the prelate of the Eastern rite, such as the bishop of Kruja, Stefan.⁷⁹⁸

The same attitude of Skanderbeg towards the two Christian churches is also seen in a hagiographic account of the life and activity of Niphon - Arvanitas from Morea, who became patriarch of Constantinople in the last decades of the fifteenth century, in which case it becomes known that before being crowned patriarch of the Eastern Church, together with Zacharias he had traveled to Kruja, where he had met with Skanderbeg and there he was convinced of the great respect he showed for the eastern church.⁷⁹⁹

SKANDERBEG AND THE WEST

Once he unites the feudal lords of Arbëria and with the impact of war felt on this union to turn into an internal fusion, Skanderbeg will turn to the efforts that the strengthening and support of the Arbërian state be linked to the help coming from the West, first and foremost, from potential allies beyond the Adriatic and the Vatican as the spiritual leader of Christianity. The successful war against the Ottomans will turn him into a protector of the West and Christianity in general and this new relationship forced the Western union around a common front and strategy, launched at the Florence "Union" Council to turn to a Christian campaign, where in all likelihood, Skanderbeg and Arbëria would play an important role.

This position and role, which came out as a result of the circumstances, would not change Skanderbeg's behavior or attitude that the war had to be fought by himself and with all his might, while from the outside it would be helped by all means, and that the greatest help would be if the Christian countries, each separately and united, would go to war with the Ottomans, either on the front lines, where they were already appearing, or even with a proclamation of the joint war of the Ottomans from all Christian lands, regardless of the distances and physical condition with them so that it could be all-encompassing.

In this situation, turning into a permanent battlefield where the Ottomans suffered defeats, failing to manage to break the resistance of the Arbërians by taking their castles and space from which they operated, Skanderbeg's Arbëria appeared as a common denominator of a Western war against the Ottomans on a front, which would have been possible if it had relied on equally common interests of making out of the experience so far. It was mostly characterized by detached front lines (Maritsa War on 1371, the Battle of Dardania Plain in

⁷⁹⁷ Idem, p. 187.

⁷⁹⁸ Idem.

⁷⁹⁹ For more see: Beduli, DH: "Disa të dhëna lidhur me periudhën e Skënderbeut nga një vepër hagiografike e shekullit XVI" ("Some data related to the period of Skanderbeg from a hagiographic work of the 16th century"), in "Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike" ("The Second Conference of Albanological Studies"), Vol. I, Tiranë, 1969, p. 629.

1389 and the Second Dardanian War in 1448, commonly carried out by the peoples of Illyricum and Central Europe), and on the other hand, by the watchful eye of others, or by special agreements with the Ottomans, such as those of the Venetians, which benefited the Ottomans and to the detriment of those involved in a line of war with them.

Skanderbeg will begin to practically see and understand the discrepancy between what for the West and Christianity represents common interest and true behavior in his defense, when special interests will emerge, placed above the common ones, appreciating the Arbërian war though leaving it focused on their space for as long as possible by trapping the Ottomans there being held back in one of its corners. While behind the glaze of its support, glory and some help by means causing a lot of noise, there would be secret talks with the Ottomans and even agreements, such as those of Venice, which in some cases, will completely ignore the strategic interests of the West as a whole, with their opposition meant to live or not to live. Here, one must even see the real reasons for the failure of what was envisioned by Pope Pius II as the crusade of Christianity against the Ottomans, which was to be led by Skanderbeg. The death of Pope Pius II, as the final preparations were being made, and Skanderbeg also annulled a peace treaty he had made with the Sultan, may have resulted in a delay, though not annulment. Because, time will tell that the West was not even ready for such a thing, as apart from words, it never wanted a joint war not, because it increasingly used secret agreements with Ottomans.

Skanderbeg's vision of a powerful Christian state of Arbëria in its ethnic space, which, if successful at war with the Ottomans, could provide a good basis for the recovery of the Roman Empire at least in the European part, in addition to the reluctance of Christian countries beyond the Adriatic to accept his role as leader of the crusade leading the West against the Ottomans, the greatest blow would suffer from their neighbors, primarily the Slavs and Greeks. The former will not only fail to be involved in the Arbërian war against the Ottomans, but will do their best to prevent it from gaining the role of a front runner in the match against the Ottomans, as predicted by Skanderbeg through the Second Dardania Battle of 1448,⁸⁰⁰ where in addition to the Hungarians, Croats, Poles, the Rascians, Arbërians and Greeks should also take part. It would be a good opportunity for a joint revenge against the defeat in the first battle of 1389.

Numerous records show that this battle would have been lost before it had properly begun, as Prince Djuradj Branković, known for his vassalage and alliances with Bayezid (Mehmed I and Murad II), would not only not get involved, according to the preliminary agreement with Hunyadi and Skanderbeg, but with great cunning, he will first prevent Hunyadi's incursions into Dardania from passing through his possessions, and then, according to a secret agreement with the Ottomans,⁸⁰¹ some of his units will fight against the Hungarians even before the appointed time for the battle, to begin as agreed on October 19, 1448 in Dardania.

The knife on the back coming to Hunyadi from Branković's betrayal before his main military force reaches Dardania is related to another factor - Venice, which, in various forms, was involved in Slavic-Ottoman tricks and games against Skanderbeg and the Christian alliance against the Ottomans. According to well-known sources, as soon as Skanderbeg and Hunyadi, in cooperation with Branković, set the time for the second battle of Dardania (mid-October), the Venetians will begin combat operations in northwestern Arbëria to take back some of the lands that Skanderbeg had taken from them through war.

Venice, fearing that he would lose the other possessions he held on the Albanian coast, had accepted their loss on condition that he no longer go there. Even Venice, under an agreement with Skanderbeg, had agreed to pay him a tribute of 1,400 ducats a year.⁸⁰²

⁸⁰⁰ See Malcolm, Noel: *"Kosova, një histori e shkurtër"*, Prishtinë, 2001.

⁸⁰¹ Idem.

⁸⁰² Idem.

The sudden contact with the Venetians broke Skanderbeg's passage to Dardania for a few days, so he set out his main units there, led by himself on October 4, with a three-week delay, which will be horrifying for the fate of the battle with the Ottomans in Dardania, because as soon as Skanderbeg approached from two directions the Plain of Dardania (Prizren and Skopje), he encountered parts of Hunyadi's army broken and fleeing. There he learned the bitter truth and quickly returned to Kruja, as it was more than clear that the loss of that battle was more than that: the loss of hope for the common front line in the match with the Ottomans among the Albanians, Slavs, Rascians and Hungarians, aided by Bulgarians, Greeks and Vlachs, which would include Croats and Bosniaks, which would then attract the decisive help of the Germans, Poles, French and other Italian principalities and kingdoms and the Spanish ones, in what would present a Christian crusade against the Ottomans, exactly as Pope Pius would have anticipated it.⁸⁰³

Some sources, however, point out that Skanderbeg, before returning, punished Djuradj Branković near Krusec, (though it is not certain if this really happened at all), and he then took measures towards Skopje to move and narrow the line of facing the Ottomans, drawing back from the Arbërian lands, which he had already united, and which were subject to a common direction. The loss of this war and the interconnection of the backstage between the sultan's vassal despots and the Venetians will make him realize that it had been an illusion for him both his family connections with the Rascian princes (of Triballi and common origin with Illyrian-Dardanian roots, being actually Slavicized Illyrians) and those with the Slavo-Orthodox Church about the fact that in the face of Ottoman danger, they had to serve common interests, as were the illusions of Venice's promises of common Western alliances against the East (to the Ottomans), which would turn into a sacred crusade, to which the Republic of St. Mark would not join, but would continuously try to prevent.⁸⁰⁴

Indeed, Skanderbeg's relations with the Venetians, despite some agreements and occasional assistance he received from the seniority, were never friendly or sincere. For the Venetians Skanderbeg always expressed concern even when he achieved success – as it affected its interests in the Arbërian lands many parts of which it held, or when it was obliged to conclude peace agreements with the Ottomans, as they could weaken their position in this part, which it considered very important for its economic but also political interests in relation to the Ottoman Empire.

These relations began to turn skeptical remaining so to the end, when Skanderbeg managed to gather the League of Lezha, called as the Albanian League, the first of its kind on which an attempt was made to establish internal unity in the war against the Ottomans, but also for the unification of the fragmented lands many of which (some of the coastal cities) were under Venetian possession. As expected, Venice not only failed to recognize this historic Albanian League, but tried to devalue it in all ways. In some of the acts issued by the Senate (mainly relations with Skanderbeg in the new circumstances), he was considered not as President of the Albanian League, but as “one of the masters of these lands” (*diti domini Jeorgia et aliorum dominorum circumtantiam*), by which for Venice he was only the lord of two mountainous provinces, far from its possessions in the Adriatic.⁸⁰⁵

Of course, Venice wanted to see Skanderbeg detached from the power and internal influence he had already achieved with the Assembly of Lezha considering it as a sign that he wanted to create a state organization out of a handful of small Arbërian lords (many of whom were so far more or less in the position of clientele towards the Republic), with further strengthening of Skanderbeg's power seen as a threat of inclusion of the Albanian coastal cities in possession of Venice in his possession.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰³ See: Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010, pp. 385-414.

⁸⁰⁴ Idem.

⁸⁰⁵ Frashëri, Kristo “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë 2002, p. 145.

⁸⁰⁶ For more see at Bartl, P: “*Relazioni fra Scanderbeg e Venezia*”, in “V Convegno Internazionale di Studi Albanesi – V Mbledhja Ndërkombëtare Studimesh Shqiptare”, 1968, Atti/Akte, Palermo 1969, pp. 162-163.

Although some sources make it clear that Skanderbeg did not want a conflict with Venice, especially in the circumstances when he was facing the Ottoman armies that were pouring in from all four sides to put an end to what they called stubbornness against the sultan, however it was inevitable, as the cause of the conflict became the city of Danja,⁸⁰⁷ provoked by the Venetians, who exploited enmity between the well-known families of Zaharia, Lord of Danja and Lekë Dukagjini, Lord of both Pultets, who according to a magnified version and with much fantasy by the Italian priest G. Biemmi “as a love intrigue turned into a big tragedy”.⁸⁰⁸

This conclusion is more or less accepted by F. Noli.⁸⁰⁹ But, it is completely ignored by M. Barleti, who shrugs the whole issue in the opposition of the inhabitants to take Danja against the intention of Lekë Dukagjini, which made Lekë Zaharia’s old mother, whose son was killed by the Dukagjinis leaving them with no heirs, to hand over her son’s possession to the Venetians of Shkodra, with which, according to Barleti, the Venetians took on the heavy responsibility of the war against the Arbërian princes.⁸¹⁰

Expectedly, the fall of Danja in the hands of the Venetians would be experienced as a loss for Lekë Dukagjini, but also for the Albanian League and Skanderbeg, who according to Barleti, “was furious, because its occupation was a wedge that made it difficult to unite the northern territories with the Albanian state”.⁸¹¹ Because, according to Barleti, there was an agreement between Skanderbeg and Lekë Zaharia, who had no heir, that “whoever dies first without a heir, will leave it to the other who would survive the kingdom to have it on the basis of the right to agreement”.⁸¹²

In these circumstances, in addition to Venice, Lekë Dukagjini also appears as a violator of the agreement, by distancing himself from Skanderbeg for years, nearly getting into a fight with him on the issue, which would probably do the same, not to mention that he had to fight his brother Nikollë Dukagjini, who also wanted to seize the castle of Danja.⁸¹³

Given the internal circumstances, i.e. both the interests of the Dukagjinis and the external ones, which were of a strategic nature, Skanderbeg was in no hurry. This highlighted his well-known political and diplomatic sense in the face of such extremely important circumstances. So, the moment he entered the war with Venice, he investigated it in the autumn of 1477. On this occasion he called the meeting of the Albanian League. From there, he demanded that a decision be made to declare war on Venice if it did not return the city of Danja to the League.

Although this decision was opposed by members (Pjetër Spani and Gjergj Dushmani – nobles of the Upper Pulti), whereby they also left the “Albanian League”, however, for the first time, he made a successful demonstration both from within and abroad by indicating that the League could not agree that with the first occupation of Drishti and then of Danja, Venice should seize the two “keys” that control the route of the two Pultis (Dukagjini) and the rest of the northeastern highlands.⁸¹⁴

But the war with Venice over Danja was not just an important measure for Skanderbeg to ensure the integrity of the newly formed state by the “League of Lezha”. On the contrary, it also appeared as an external reckoning that as such could put into play many factors in its favor, as Venice was already in a conflict with the Duchy of Lombardy. This prompted the Papacy to intervene, so as not to weaken the anti-Ottoman war of the Albanians, which was in a frenzy, while its spirit in the West was not to be silenced by a war between the Albanians and the Venetians. Thus, in order to avoid any discord, the Pope congratulated Skanderbeg on

⁸⁰⁷ See Frashëri, Kristo: “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu”, Tiranë 2002, p. 146.

⁸⁰⁸ See Giammaria, Biemmi: “*Istoria di Giorgio Castrioto Skanderbegh*”, Brescia, 1742.

⁸⁰⁹ See Noli, Fan S: “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu”, Tiranë, 1957, p. 91.

⁸¹⁰ Barleti, Marin: “*Historia e jetës dhe veprës së Skënderbeut*”, Prishtinë, 1968.

⁸¹¹ For more on Barleti’s stances see “at K. Frashëri: “Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 148.

⁸¹² Idem.

⁸¹³ Idem.

⁸¹⁴ Idem, p. 150.

his successful war against the Ottomans as a “very strong athlete” (*fortissimo atleta*) in defense of the Christian religion and an “intrepid striker” (*intrepido pugile*) in defense of honor, growth and stability of the Christian religion in the cities and villages of Albania. On the other hand, Venice, in relation to Skanderbeg and his demands, demanded proper conduct, as his war against the Ottomans was linked to the major interests of the West. ..

But, as will be seen, the major issue of the interests of the West, related to Skanderbeg’s war against the Ottomans, was seen differently from Venice, i.e. in accordance with the interests of the Republic of St. Mark on the Albanian coast. This had led Venice to enter into secret alliances with the Ottomans. According to this agreement, the Ottomans were required to throw an army against Skanderbeg, on the side of Dibra, distracting war with Venice, which was taking place in the north, on the Drin. According to the sources of the time, in the decisive battle that took place in July 1448, Skanderbeg’s fighters defeated the Venetian army commanded by Daniel Gurici.⁸¹⁵

Skanderbeg’s victory over the Venetians is also confirmed by the peace treaty signed between them on October 4, 1448. Previously, this victory, as well as the agreement with the Venetians, had a bitter price for Skanderbeg, as it went through a defeat, the first in the war against the Ottomans, that of the defeat of Sfetigrad, which is assessed to have been a sacrifice to save Kruja, which withstood the powerful Ottoman attacks led by Murad II.⁸¹⁶

The defeat of Sfetigrad, and the defense of Kruja and the peace agreement with Venice in October 1448, galvanized Skanderbeg further in the eyes of the Pope, who now saw him as a “Guardian Angel” and in the eyes of Venice, which, although able to turn defeat against his army in Drin, with the return of Danja and other parts beyond the river Drin, into a diplomatic victory, were aware that his resistance could go as far as keeping the backstage with the Ottomans open, so this did not stop them from their double play with plenty of behind the scenes games being played.

Despite these backstage games, some of which he might have foreseen, as he was aware of such relations, however, it can be said that Skanderbeg was not always alone in his epic war, as reportedly in different ways he was supported by powerful factors such as the Papacy, Kingdom of Naples, the City of Ragusa, and at times even by the Republic of Venice,⁸¹⁷ despite the fact that he faced great troubles with Venice, as it had supervision over the major Adriatic cities (Durrës, Lezha, Drishti, Ulqin, Tivar and Shkodra) and other parts in the North, from where the syntagm “Venetian Arbëria” comes.⁸¹⁸

Since Arbëria was the last Catholic-Roman bridge in Illyricum, and the popes did their best to preserve and expand it, it was clear that it had to be supported both with money and people (military). After all, the support of any resistance against the Ottomans, as a priority of the West, was formulated by the Council of Florence of 1448-1449. Although Foigt and Fallmerayer say the popes only helped Skanderbeg with apostolic blessings and panegyric lectures,⁸¹⁹ however, there is evidence that Pope Nicholas V (1447-1453), Calixtus III (1453-58), and Pius II (1458-1473) helped Skanderbeg with sounding money that amounted to

⁸¹⁵ About the victory of Skanderbeg against the Venetians in the summer of 1448 see Barleti, M: “*Skanderbeg*”, Prishtina, 1968, and Biemmi, G. “*Istoria di Giorgio Castrioto Scander-begh*”, Brescia, 1742; Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu*”, Tiranë 1967, p. 89.

⁸¹⁶ About the defeat of Sfetigrad and the peace with Venice see Noli, Fan S.: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë 1956, p. 93; Frashëri, Kristo “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 158; Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010.

⁸¹⁷ Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 37

⁸¹⁸ For more see: Schmitt, Oliver Jens: “*Arbëria veneciane*”, Tiranë, 2008, providing a broad picture, although overestimated of the relations between Venice and Skanderbeg, dealing with the presence of Venice in the Albanian Adriatic in almost all historical stages and the role it has played in the economic and political life of the Albanian space.

⁸¹⁹ Fallmerayer, Johann Philipp: “*Das Albanensische Element in Grichenland*”, München, 1866, Vol. IX, p. 88.

thousands of gold ducats from the papal treasury.⁸²⁰ Thus, in 1467 Skanderbeg received 1500 ducats from Ferdinand of Naples, 3400 from Venice and 9250 from Pope Pius II.⁸²¹

According to Noli, the reasons for this continued support were clear: Skanderbeg was their surest ally, because for almost twenty-five years he fought steadily against the common enemy, with only two brief interruptions of nearly six months each, trapping the Ottomans in that part and significantly affecting the restraint of their efforts to cross the Otranto.⁸²² .. Since, according to Pope Calixtus III, in a letter he had admitted that Skanderbeg had done more for religion than all other Catholic princes, he advised his legate to hand over to the King of Bosnia part of the funds raised in Dalmatia for the new Crusade, so that he, driven by financial aid, would become “the next Skanderbeg”.⁸²³

Alongside the Holy See, it was Naples that would have helped Skanderbeg the most in every way. This was also reasonable as the east coast of the kingdom of Naples was only fifty miles away, at some point between Brindisi and Vlora. Thus, aimed at self-defense, the kingdom of Naples helped Skanderbeg to prolong his resistance and protect Arbëria, which was, in a sense, a Neapolitan conduit.⁸²⁴

In addition, it was not only the sense of self-defense that fueled the attitude of the Neapolitan kings, but also their dream of creating the Catalan Mediterranean Empire, which would extend from Barcelona to Constantinople.⁸²⁵

Along with Naples and Sicily, Alfonso V, King of Aragon, inherited the ambitions of his ancestors, Frederick II, Robert Guiscard and Charles of Anjou, who established the “Kingdom of Arbëria” from 1272-1326, uniting for the first time the feudal lords and nobles of Arbëria in a state project of their own.

Despite this great help that Skanderbeg received from Naples and his known connections with Alfonso V when he went to Naples and secured the royal crown when he was in danger, Noli rejects the thesis that Skanderbeg’s connections with Naples had turned him into a simple “*condottiere*” (mercenary) in the service of Naples or Venice, as judged by George, Langer. and some others.⁸²⁶

This theory, in various forms, will reach to our day as a construct of “*Venetian Albania*”,⁸²⁷ in which the natural conditions, such as those of trade with Venice and the binding alliances with the Republic on the eve and during the Ottoman conquests, including also those which Skanderbeg had accepted under difficult conditions to keep outside the Ottoman conquests, to be reflected mainly as a matter of Venetian social, cultural and political “dominance” over the Arbërian world. Although this would be desired by the Arbërians, however, the realities show that the presence of the Venetians was only limited to the level of trade and nothing more.⁸²⁸

In addition to overestimating Venice’s role in relation to Skanderbeg and the Arbërian war against the Ottoman conquests, there are also extremely contradictory objections and assessments, such as that of the Polish Makusev, in which Venice’s policy in the lands of Arbëria under his rule, beyond any civilizing attribute and western affiliation, which had its

⁸²⁰ For more see: Farlati, Vol. VII, p. 421; Pastor, Ludwig: “*Geschichte des papstums*”, 1891, Vol. IV, p. 86; Gegaj, Athanas: “*L’Albanie et L’Invasion turque au XV-eme Siece*”, 1937, p. 144.

⁸²¹ See: Trichera “*Codice Aragonese*”, faqe 90, Annex no. 40; Ljubić, Sime: “Isitine o odnosu izmedju juznog slovenstva i Mletačke Republike”, Zagreb, 1875-1891, Vol. X, no. CCCCI, p. 387; Pastor, Völl, IV, p. 86; Gegaj, Athanas: “*L’Albani et L’Invasion turque au XV-eme Siece*”, 1937, pp. 144-45.

⁸²² Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 49.

⁸²³ See Theiner, Augustinus: “*Monumenta Slavorum*”, Rome, 1863, Vol. I, no. DCII, pp. 427-8, Annex no. 15; Makushev, Vikentije Vasilević: “*Istoričeskia Razyskania o Slavjanah v Albanii v Srednieg Veka*”, Varshava, 1871, p. 93.

⁸²⁴ Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 50.

⁸²⁵ See: Jorga, Nicolae: “*Breve Histoire de l’Albani et du Peuple Albanais*”, Bukuresht, 1919, p. 47.

⁸²⁶ Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 51.

⁸²⁷ See: Schmitt, Oliver Jens: “*Shqipëria veneciane*”, Tiranë, 2007.

⁸²⁸ Idem.

direct influence as an alternative to the Byzantines and the invading policy of the Slavs, is described as “an extermination war against the Arbërian social classes”.⁸²⁹

Here is how this author justifies Venice's political behavior:

“In the Arbërian cities of Durres, Leshi, Shkodra, Drishti, Ulqin and Tivar, which Venice annexed, the aristocracy was being humiliated, the bourgeoisie was being destroyed and the free peasantry was turning to serfdom. In general, the annexation of Arbërian land then came as the final stage of this process. The leaders of the Arbërian tribes were subsidized and encouraged to fight Turkey until they were drowned in blood and then forced to surrender to Venice unconditionally, as a lesser evil than Turkey. After their subjugation, they were treated as slaves to a colonial country. When the chiefs of the tribes were too strong to be crushed by the Turks, Venice did not hesitate to stab them in the back, inciting fratricidal wars between them, or even declaring war on them. He had destroyed the Balshaj, and hoped to repeat the same method against Skanderbeg. At least three times, Skanderbeg proposed to the Venetians to hand over Kruja in order to save it from the Turks (in 1449, 1450 and 1466), but the Venetians refused believing that Skanderbeg, with his highlanders, was too strong to become their obedient servant. They would rather see Kruja ruled by the Turks than own it, before its inhabitants were destroyed and defeated. It is a fact that they took over the defense of the city only after Skanderbeg died in 1468, and annexed the city only in 1474, when the people were exhausted and could surely be enslaved. In this way, the Venetians allowed all the southern cities of Arbëria to fall into the hands of the Turks, although they were occasionally given the opportunity to take them under their protection if they wished to accept them.

It is clear that the Venetians thought that Arbëria could be taken away from the Turks much more easily than from the Arbërians themselves. Strangely enough, apart from a few brief interruptions, they continued to subsidize Skanderbeg, even though they hated him wholeheartedly! They pursued such a policy, at times, because they wanted to wage war on the Turks, but apparently without defending their colonies in Arbër.”⁸³⁰

Romanian Iorga speaks similarly as the Polish historian.⁸³¹ He claims that the Venetians were forced to make peace with Skanderbeg, as in 1448 and 1451, for example, when he was reaping victories after victories and could threaten their colonies, and other times because they were scared to death by Mehmed II, as in 1453 after the fall of Constantinople, and other times as they still desperately needed Skanderbeg as an ally against the Turks, as happened in 1463-68.⁸³²

Croatian Lubić will also join this position saying as follows: “Even during this last period, the Venetians allowed their *proveditores* (governors) in Arbëria to prevent Skanderbeg at every step and to stab him in the back. Skanderbeg finally refused to accept Venetian auxiliary troops unless they were placed under his direct command.”⁸³³

Despite occasional links of interest, sometimes imposed by the various circumstances under which Skanderbeg went through his heroic war, such as those between the Papacy, Naples, and Venice, they were those of Ragusa, which may be said to be extremely friendly and of mutual benefit.⁸³⁴

⁸²⁹ See: Makushev, Vikentije Vasilević: “*Istoričarski Rasyskanja o Slovjana v Albanii v Srednie Vek*”, Varshava, 1871, p. 132 and pp. 146-47, cited according to Noli, Fan S: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1967, p. 51.

⁸³⁰ Idem, p. 52.

⁸³¹ See: Jorga, Nicolae: “*Breve Historie de l’Albani et du Peuple Albanais*”, Bukuresht, 1919.

⁸³² Idem, p. 46.

⁸³³ Lubić, Sime: “*Istine o odnosu između južnog slovenstva i Mletačke Republike*”, Zagreb, 1875, Vol. X, p. 334.

⁸³⁴ More about Skanderbeg’s relations with Venice and the Ottoman-Venetian ones and his war on two fronts see: Barleti, Marin: “*Skënderbeu*”, Prishtinë, 1968; Noli S, Fan “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 1957, 80-102; Gegaj, Athanas “*A’Albaue et l’Invasion Turque au XV siecle*”, Paris, 1937; Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë 2010 389-414; Frashëri, Kristo: “*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 143-162; Biçoku, K: “*Disa aspekte të marrëdhënieve të Skënderbeut me Venedikun*”, in “*Second Conference of Albanological Studies - Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike*”, Vol. I, Tiranë, 1969, pp. 67-74; Schmitt, Jens Olivirt: “*Shqipëria veneciane*”, Tiranë, 2002.

The rich city of Ragusa never forgot its Roman origins and continued to use Latin and Italian as official languages. Money and trade were the only weapons the Ragusan patricians used to help all those fighting Turkey, the most dangerous invader of the time.⁸³⁵

Since Skanderbeg had taken the flag of that war, he was their natural ally, as well as a customer who bought their goods. They also acted as his bankers.⁸³⁶ The connection became even more friendly due to the fact that the city had a large Arbërian population, and some Arbërian had managed to rise to the ranks of the upper classes. Among the patricians were also members of families from Drishti: Suma, Polombo, Lapore and Spani. Like all the cities of southern Dalmatia, Ragusa had many clergy and monks from Arbëria who performed almost all the church services.⁸³⁷

This explains the cordial relationship that existed between Ragusa and Skanderbeg, as well as the excellent expectations that were placed on him every time he visited the city. It is not surprising, then, that Ragusa declared the day of Skanderbeg's death a day of perpetual mourning.

SKANDERBEG'S DEATH AND THE END OF ARBËRIAN NOBILITY

Skanderbeg's death in 1468 from malaria fever would mark the beginning of the end of one of the greatest historical efforts of the Arbërians in the war against the Ottomans, which for more than a quarter of a century was also a war for the protection of Western civilization from the eastern conquest. Depending on the views, he will be given various epithets from those of the highest honor by the papacy with the proposal for the consecration "*King of Arbëria*",⁸³⁸ and to being proclaimed "*Guardian Angel of Christianity*" and the like, clothing his figure with mythical overtones.

Despite those who followed Skanderbeg and his appearance from the historical figure among the greatest to the mythical one, it remains undeniable that Arbërians entered this war as the first rebels against the Ottoman occupation, crowned with an oreol of the first victory of the Europeans in the war against the Ottomans, a victory that although not able to materialize in accordance with Skanderbeg's predictions, its tag will be collected by Western Christianity, even as temporary and he will use this in various ways, even as moral and spiritual capital, in the further struggle against the penetrations of Islam.

Although Arbëria, left without a *Lord* continued to resist the Ottoman attacks for several more years, it will not escape the worst, namely the Ottoman reconquest, severe punishment and five-century of captivity, which will follow them. And this loss for Arbërians, in addition to their military defeat and collapse of the entire state building erected with so much effort during the quarter-century war against the world's greatest military power, also means a deep and multifaceted loss with tragic consequences, which will make some of his critics of both past and present ask the question whether it was worth it at all, since, according to them, the country was severely punished, while the consequences of that loss continued to produce

⁸³⁵ Noli, Fan S: "*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 1967, p. 52.

⁸³⁶ Miklosich, Franz: "*Monumenta Serbica Spectantia Historiam Serbia, Bosna, Ragusi*", Vienna, 1858, p. 442.

⁸³⁷ See: Šufflay Milan: "*Acta et Diplomata*", and "*Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*", Vol. I, Wien, 1924, p. 265.

⁸³⁸ See the unpublished Codex of the Angel in Latin, which is kept in the Laurentianis Library of Florence (Italy), saying that Pope Pius II had proposed that Skanderbeg be ordained "*King of Albania*" with the following content: "*The general decree of our Lord Pius II, consecrated by the divine grace of the Pope, who at the request of the very honest and very excellent Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Archbishop of Durrës, Mr. Angel, has granted Mr. Skanderbeg, the invincible warrior against the Muslim sect, king of Albania.*" Quoted according to Kristo Frashëri "*Skënderbeu i shpërfytyruar*" ("*Skanderbeg disfigured*"), Tirana, 2009, p. 112.

serious consequences for Arbërians even later to a point of forgetting the name Arbërians and Arbëria being replaced with *Shqiptar* and *Shqipëri* (*Albanian* and *Albania*)?⁸³⁹

Those who think so have in mind what will happen to Arbëria after the recapture by the Ottomans, when the whole country was subjected to unprecedented terror, on the one hand as revenge for the losses suffered by two of the most powerful sultans of the time before the walls of Kruja, Murad II and Mehmed II, and on the other hand, the severe punishment they received, which was to serve others as a lesson in what awaits them if they turn to rebellion.⁸⁴⁰

As a result of these actions, we first have the movement of a large part of the Arbërian population across the sea, towards Southern Italy and other parts of Europe, continuing with numerous repressive measures against those who would remain in the homeland. Various sources of the time point out that this displacement will begin even before Skanderbeg dies, but it will take on alarming proportions immediately after his death when Skanderbeg's wife, Donika, and her 13 year old son Gjon will go on exile.⁸⁴¹

This exile was in a way foreseen by an agreement that Skanderbeg had made with Alfonso of Naples stipulating that his kin and part of the gentry would be sheltered there, not forever, but to be protected and prepare for their return to homeland the moment that circumstances would allow.⁸⁴²

It was natural that in addition to Skanderbeg's family, most of the Albanian nobility, nobles, merchants and some of the feudal lords would take that path. Later they will be joined by Skanderbeg's well-known military men and warriors, who will serve the naval republics of Venice, Genoa and Naples, and many of them will go as far as Spain and other countries offering their serving as mercenaries.

Before this great exodus occurred, the Arbërians, especially the nobles and important lords who had supported Skanderbeg to the end, will continue to fight, but now in new circumstances, which, in the absence of a personality who would equal the Hero, the political life and with it the resistance began to return to the starting condition of a quarter of a century before, that is, when the feudal lords appeared independent and behaved in accordance with their interests. Thus, some of the larger families came out on their own again and began to rely on Venice, without excluding some who began to look to the Ottomans in order to defend themselves by renewing their vassal relations they had with them.

Venice was the one that already appeared as a factor that had to decide on the continuation of the supervised resistance, always in accordance with its own interests, and also to preserve the colonies and possessions it had in these parts, without hesitation to enter into agreements with the Ottomans, as it would actually do. The first step Venice took to take matters into its own hands was to send to Angelos, Skanderbeg's longtime representative in Venice, back to Kruja to intervene with the Kastrioti family to hand over Kruja and other possessions.⁸⁴³

Here and in this issue will emerge the problems that will follow the presence, but also the intervention of Venice in the time after Skanderbeg, as discussed in the previous chapter,

⁸³⁹ See Edward Gibbon "*History of the Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*", published in London, 1900; Oliver Jens Schmitt "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2009; Husamedin Feraj: "*Skicë e mendimit politik shqiptar*" ("*An Outline of Albanian political thought*"), 1998; Driton Egro: "*Një qasje kritike studimeve osmane në historiografinë moderne shqiptare*" ("*A critical approach to Ottoman studies in modern Albanian historiography*"), Tiranë. 2007.

⁸⁴⁰ For more on Ottoman terror see at Pulaha S. "*Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shekullin XV. Burime osmane*" ("*The Albanian-Turkish war in the 15th century. Ottoman sources*"), Tiranë, 1968, See: "*Kronikën e Tursun Beut*" ("*Tursun Bey's Chronicle*") and "*Luftërat shqiptaro-turke në veprat e kronistëve osmanë të shekujve XV-XVII*" ("*Albanian-Turkish wars in the works of Ottoman chroniclers of the 15th-17th centuries*"), in "*Studime Historike*", 1/1968, pp. 121-153., and "*Studime për Epokën e Skënderbeut*", Vol. II, Tiranë 1989, pp. 391-435.

⁸⁴¹ *Donika Kastrioti*, along with her son, Gjon, left for Italy a few weeks after Skanderbeg's death and settled on the properties they owned in Italy (Monte Santa Angelo and San Giovanni Rotondo).

⁸⁴² For more see Barleti, Marin: "*Skënderbeu*", Prishtinë, 1968; Noli, Fan Stilian: "*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu 1405-1468*", Tiranë 1957; Frashëri, Kristo: "*Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu – jeta dhe vepra*", Tiranë, 2002; Pulaha, Selami: "*Skënderbeu*", Tiranë, 2010.

⁸⁴³ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", First Part, Tiranë, 2002, p. 466.

when the intervention of the Naval Republic, on the one hand will take over the continuation of the armed resistance, which is known to continue until 1479, when Shkodra will fall into the hands of the Ottomans, while on the other hand it will divide the Arbërian factor, which will enter into war with it. As was the case with Lekë Dukagjini and some others, who will turn their eyes to the Ottomans, with whom, a little later, they will enter into new vassal relations.

This climate, that is, the return of Venice as “the lord of the house” in a good part of what Skanderbeg had turned into the state of Arbëria and for a quarter of a century had continued to appear as such, will certainly be helped by the two-three-year abstention of the Ottomans from the battlefield for reasons of involvement in other areas, especially on the front with the Hungarians, where they were already aiming to from there burst towards the center of Europe.

But the Ottomans returned to Arbëria in May 1474. This time, they did not turn to Kruja, where the Venetians had already settled, with whom the Ottomans had many peace agreements, but to Shkodra, which was of particular importance.

The battle for Shkodra lasted three months, and by the end of the summer, the Ottoman armies led by Rumelia’s Beylerbey, Sinan Pasha, withdrew from the siege. In return, after destroying the place, especially the castle of Deja, which was once protected by Lekë and Nikollë Dukagjini, in the end turned to ashes. Two years later, the Ottomans returned with an even larger army.

This time they surrounded Kruja, which was defended by the joint Arbërian-Venetian forces, which were joined by 300 more strategists brought from Morea. The siege of Kruja lasted two years until June 16, 1478, when Ottoman forces, led by Mehmed II, forced the defenders to surrender after they were promised free departure from the city.

The Ottomans did not keep their promise to let the defenders walk freely out.⁸⁴⁴ On the contrary, with exclusion of the Venetian governor and his guard, who were allowed to leave, the locals were killed without exception.

After that, Sultan Mehmed II, turned to Shkodra and on the way conquered Drishti, which he destroyed, and then entered the castle of Lezha, which had been abandoned by the Venetian commander, who was leading its defense. Here, too, the locals who had taken part in the defense were left at the mercy of the Ottomans, so those finding refuge on the island of Lezha were captured and massacred in front of the walls of Rozafa.⁸⁴⁵

Sultan Mehmed II did not say to see the capture of Shkodra. As it was clear that the occupation of Arbëria was no longer a matter of military prestige, but of diplomatic games with Venice, which had never ceased between them, in September he took the road back to Istanbul. Although it was said that the remaining troops around Shkodra had to continue the siege until the famine overcame Arbërians, that is, till they surrendered, it is very likely that Mehmed II demanded an agreement with Venice in order to keep it away from ties with Hungary and other countries which he had targeted.

The signing of the peace agreement between Venice and the Ottoman Empire on January 25, 1479, in addition to other issues related to the preservation of Venetian possessions in the Mediterranean, included the issue of Shkodra and several other coastal cities (Himara, Sopot, and Kastrovila), which were handed over to the Ottomans. According to this agreement, Shkodra passed into the hands of the Ottomans, while its defenders and inhabitants were free to leave their city.

On April 25, 1479, Ottoman forces entered Shkodra. It is known that its inhabitants and the surrounding areas almost completely left and settled in the Venetian region. Along with them, the well-known nobles Lekë and Nikollë Dukagjini, Gjurash Cernojevic and others also left the place.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴⁴ Idem, p. 470.

⁸⁴⁵ For more see Pulaha, S: “*Lufta shqiptaro-turke në shekullin XV. Burime osmane*”, Tiranë, 1968.

⁸⁴⁶ See Pulaha S: “*Mbi rënien e Skënderbeut*” (“*On the Fall of Scanderbeg*”), at “*Studime për Epokën e Skënderbeut*”, Vol. III, Tiranë, 1989, pp. 476-481; Inhalxhik, Halil: “*Perandoria Osmane*”, Shkup. 2010, pp. 55-57.

The fall of Shkodra and other important coastal cities in the hands of the Ottomans, as well as the occupation of the castle of Otranto by them, made Western countries, including Venice, which had signed agreements with the Ottomans, sacrificing a good part of the Arbërian resistance for its own interests, to create an anti-Ottoman front, which had to be concentrated in Arbëria, meaning to establish an uncertain background for the Ottoman troops operating and being sent to Italy. It was also the death of Sultan Mehmed II in 1481 and the political crisis it provoked in the Empire, which turned Arbëria into a factor again, at least temporarily and to the benefit of the West.

On this occasion, from Naples and other Western allies, Skanderbeg's son, Gjon, was used to return to his homeland to take over the anti-Ottoman resistance, which had begun to be provoked by several uprisings in some parts of the country. At this time, Nikollë Dukagjini, Lekë Dukagjini, Konstantin Muzaka and Gjurash Cërnojeviq also returned to the country. The latter made an agreement with the Ottomans and accepted their vassalage, though the other feudal Arbërians who returned were not far from following the same attitude.

With the strong support of the Westerners, Gjon Kastrioti, who had descended to the South of Durrës, was escorted by Konstantin Muzaka, who would go down to Himara, also assisted by the Dukagjinis in the North, acting in the regions of Lezha and Shkodra, will start a front of resistance against the Ottomans, which will begin to reap successes, especially in the middle and southern parts, where the young Kastrioti operated successfully, as he had many Western volunteers and Stratiotes, well trained for such wars. In fact, in August 1481, Muzaka managed to defeat the forces of Suleyman Pasha and take Himara. There he was taken prisoner by the Beylerbey of Rumelia, Suleyman Pasha, who was brought as a war trophy to Gjon Kastrioti, whom he then sent to the king of Naples as a trophy.⁸⁴⁷

Gjon Kastrioti's victories in Himara and in some other parts, made the Ottoman forces, which were sent to Italy, weakened by the losses with Arbërians, suffer losses from Naples, which in September 1481 liberated the castle of Otranto, expelling the Ottomans from Italy. Thus, the Western nightmare that had overtaken them after the Ottomans landed in Italy was due to the war that took place in the "background" with the Arbërians. Impressed that they could do more, Arbërians, under the leadership of Gjon Kastrioti, continued towards Kruja, hoping they would take it and restore the state of Skanderbeg. However, they got stuck on its walls, as their support weakened again, with the West wishing to use their resistance to settle accounts with the Ottomans, which resulted in first the withdrawal from the siege of Kruja and then the loss of the castle of Himara, and secondly, the departure of Gjon Kastrioti to Italy, who died in 1502 leaving behind his children: George (Skanderbeg Junior), Constantine, bishop of Izemia, who died in 1550 at the age of 20, Ferrante, who had died in 1561, Federico, who died in 1503 at the age of 15 in Valencia, Spain, where he was buried with royal honors, and Mariane, who devoted herself to art.⁸⁴⁸

The use of Arbërians for the needs of the westerners will continue even further, to end with Skanderbeg's grandson, Gjergj Kastrioti, who will be sent to the homeland of his famous grandfather to return the "Great Age". It was more of an adventure of failure than a service to the Venetians for new accounts with the Ottomans, rather than an attempt to do anything about it. Two years later, just as some of the Arbërian feudal lords were gaining the impression that a turn could be made, the Ottomans conquered Durrës and thus forced the Venetians to give up any attempt to disturb them with an "Arbërian background", which had to be extinguished after Venice signed a new peace treaty with the Ottomans.

Skanderbeg's grandson, along with several Arbërian feudal lords who were exploiting the uprising, went to Shkodra in accordance with this agreement (among them Progon Dukagjini and others), to demand the return of their possessions to be governed by them under the sovereignty of the Sultan. The Sanjakbey of Shkodra, Feriz Bey, accepted many of these

⁸⁴⁷ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 474.

⁸⁴⁸ Idem, p. 457.

demands, while rejecting that of the young Gjergj Kastrioti, who was forced to return to Italy, from where he then moved to Cyprus, where after a while, he died under suspicious circumstances.

In anticipation of the call of the “Great Age” that one day they could return to *God’s* oath of allegiance to the homeland and the debt owed to it, the elite Arbërian units, called Stratioti, with the fading hope, will continue to fight under foreign flags for a long time being the most sought after soldiers of the time.

In addition to the lack of social and military elites, which will leave the country, another major disaster befalling Arbëria after the death of Skanderbeg and the return of the Ottoman Empire will be on the one hand the mass displacement of the population from the city towards mountainous parts to find shelter. This will consequently mean their acculturation, but on the other hand also the displacement of another part of population towards Italy, which in great waves continued for almost half a century.

The population of Morea (Peloponnese), which began to move out even before the war with the Ottomans settling mainly in Calabria and Sicily, will be joined by a large part of the Arvanites of Greece, who experienced the loss of war with the Ottomans as a permanent loss of homeland.

In these circumstances, it is estimated that about a third of the Arbërian population will leave Arbëria forever. Those who will remain, left without an Arbërian gentry and nobility, without enough priests to have them near and without the slightest spiritual supervision, will have no choice but to accept captivity in accordance with the laws of survival, where the acceptance of Islam was presented as an inevitable factor.

Although formally, the acceptance of Islam was not conditional, as the Ottoman Empire maintained religious tolerance and this is best evidenced by the relationship with the Orthodox Church, which will almost “voluntarily” hand over autocephaly to the Sultan with the Christian population benefited from it in preserving its spiritual identity - however, Arbërians will be the only one of the Christian peoples of Illyricum who will not be able to use the Christian religious identity for the benefit of preserving their being, as it should happen with the Slavs, Greeks, Bulgarians and others. .. The reasons are quite simple. And, they relate to the church factor and the hostage of the line of Emperor Theodosius from the fourth century and the final division of the church in the eleventh century, into that of the Latin rite based in Rome and that of the Orthodox rite, based in Constantinople, where Arbërians will be found divided on both sides and with constant tendencies of passing from one rite to another, always in accordance with the alliances established and the relations emerging from them.

If it can be said that before and during the time of Skanderbeg the ecclesiastical geography with three views (that of the Catholic rite, of the Orthodox rite and uniates), was significantly in favor of the Catholic one, where the Orthodox dioceses from the time of the “Kingdom of Arbëria” of Charles I Anjou, although maintaining the Orthodox rite, were associated with the Holy See, after the Ottoman reconquest, the situation will change significantly in favor of the Orthodox rite. Sources at the time said that not only the “volatile” dioceses, which were linked to the Holy See, would be returned to Constantinople, but also the Catholic ones, many of whom would be forced to convert to the Orthodox rite because it saved them from the savage persecution of the Ottomans, who had declared war not only on the Catholic faithful, but also on the clergy and their church in general, considering to be the church of the “traitor Skanderbeg”, whose traces had to be wiped out.⁸⁴⁹

In the prevailing circumstances and with the mortgage of this division, Arbërians will start living under the Ottoman occupation, dually handicapped: on the one hand, because of the lack of autocephaly of their Orthodox Church, they will be forced to spiritually submit to the Greco-Slavic Orthodox Church, and on the other hand, the believers of the Catholic rite,

⁸⁴⁹ Pisko, Julius Ernest: “*Skanderbeg, Historische Studie*”, Wien, 1894, p. 162.

for a long time, will remain almost detached and with limited spiritual care, for the fact that the Catholic clergy in Arbëria, to a large extent, will remain detached from Vatican. It will even look like the agreement of the Holy See with the Sublime Porte regarding the organization of the Catholic Church in Arbëria, for most part, will go through the “territorial filters” of the Slav-Orthodox Church, since with the new administrative division most of the Arbërian space is left under its supervision.

Faced with this situation, the part of the Arbërians of the Orthodox faith who will be subject to the Greek Orthodox Church, whether they liked it or not, will be forced to accept Slavization or Greekization, as these churches were allowed mass in their native language, while the believers of the Latin rite still remained with Mass in Latin and under the direction of the center, where most of the clergy continued not to be Arbërians. Later, with the emergence of the Dominican and Franciscan orders in Arbëria, some changes will be made in this direction, though they will not be able to improve the difficult position of the Catholic believers in Arbëria, especially those from the dioceses extending into the jurisdiction of the Greek Slav-Orthodox Church.

In these circumstances, preserving the Christian religious identity for Arbërians did not mean at the same time protecting their spiritual being. On the contrary, for those of the Slavic-Orthodox rite, the Slavic and Greek churches, as the vassalage of the sultan and patriarchy of Constantinople was accepted in some segments (tax system and local administration), had become part of the mechanisms of the Ottoman power. With this status, the Orthodox Church, with its liturgical language in Greek, Bulgarian and Slavic, in fact, the Christian identity, will initially turn it into an ethnic identity (in accordance with the extension of the language of the liturgy), while, later, when nationalist movements begin, on a platform of national identity. While for the believers of the Catholic rite, the centralist preservation of supervision by the Holy See with the unique preaching of Mass in Latin and outside of any physical presence with it, created the suspicion of sacrifice without any social counter-value.

CHAPTER THREE **BETWEEN EAST AND WEST**

IN SEARCH OF RECONNECTING WITH WESTERN CIVILIZATION

It has been rightly assessed that the Ottoman Turks, while inflicting a devastating blow on their previous cultural life, whose existence had been linked to the West since antiquity, were not able to replace it from the beginning with their Islamic culture. In the 15th and 16th centuries, they presented themselves as heirs of Islamic culture, though this culture was spread in Arabic and Persian, which few Turks understood. The feudal class of the Sipahis and the servants of the Muslim religion operating in Albania and who were supposed to be the bearers of Islamic culture, generally had Albanian origin and very few knew the Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages. In addition, the timar regime, by its very military character, did not give any impetus to cultural development, as the main concern of the local feudal class was to extract feudal rent from the peasants. All this resulted in the 16th century Albania, unable to maintain its continuity of the civilization with which it was associated, and from the real inability to accept Islamic

civilization in accordance with the dynamics of social and political processes brought about by the Ottoman circumstances, sinking into a obvious cultural backwardness.⁸⁵⁰

The data show that it took more than a century for the Ottoman invaders to open several few Turkish schools in Albania, built through *vakifs* with donations from wealthy Muslim believers. These were Islamic religious schools, at the level of primary schools (*meyteps*), aimed at teaching students to read the Qur'an in order to then serve in the country's mosques. Thus, the Ottomans did not intend to raise and emancipate the masses, nor of believers in cultural terms, as this would mean a completely different approach, except to put them in complete dependence from the point of view of obedience, keeping them in a state of a complete ignorance. This aspect will rather come to light on the eve of national independence when over 97% of the population was illiterate.

The Christian clergy, especially the Catholic clergy, although with significant difficulties in the new circumstances, after the initial difficulties with the emergence of the Reformation in Germany, will return to the strategy of protecting their believers in Arbëria in terms of personnel, renewing them, with the aim of including Albanians. At the Council of Toronto in 1540, the Catholic Church decided to reorganize the Catholic clergy in Illyricum, and especially the much weakened one in Arbëria, which out of 20 monasteries with 120 monks on the eve of the Ottoman conquest, in 1570, was left with 4 monasteries and 11 monks.⁸⁵¹

At the Second Convention of Toronto in 1570, Rome decided to open several special colleges for the clergy of various countries of the world, as well as for the Albanian clergy in Illyricum. One of the first schools of this nature was "*College of St. Athanasius*", founded in Rome in 1572, under the direction of the Basilian monks, especially for the Arbërian and Greek students of Italy turned into uniates. A special school for Catholic students in Dalmatia was set up in 1580 in Loreto called the "*Illyricum College*", which was also attended by Albanian clerics and, as will be seen, will be some of the circle of these clerical students who will make Albanian education and Albanian literature tsake its unstoppable life.⁸⁵²

These two steps, however, meant a new agreement with the Porte on the presence of the Catholic Church in the occupied territories with the commitment to first preserve its space in relation to the Orthodox Church, which under the sovereignty of the Porte was preferred because its autocephaly had submitted to the Sultan. It also meant the translation of ecclesiastical books into Albanian and their publication, which was not an easy task, given the fact that the Holy See had some principled agreements with the Porte, though not specific ones affecting rite relations, which granted the Orthodox Church space for action and influence based on which it could use its authority, as would actually happen, for the eastern affiliation to be identified with Slavic ethnicity. This factor was then, later, exploited for nationalist and hegemonic purposes. So the first step was related to a focused campaign of Catholicism in the spirit of so-called unityism, so that the Albanian population of the Orthodox faith would be as far away as possible from the Church of the East and join that of Rome.⁸⁵³

The missionaries of the *uniata* movement in Arbëria were the Basilian monks. As early as the 16th century, teams from the ranks of the Basilian monks came from Italy to settle in the middle and south. In Himara they reaped significant successes, as in their campaign they promised the Himariots that by converting to *uniates*, Rome would help them with weapons and other means of war against the Turkish rulers. The *uniata* campaign continued throughout the next century, but the Istanbul Patriarchate, due to the good ties it had established with the Sublime Porte and the Sultan, managed to restore some of its lost positions, and it will be

⁸⁵⁰ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", First Volume, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 347.

⁸⁵¹ On the position of the Catholic clergy in Albania see: *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustratia, collegerunt et digesserunt Thollpezy, Jireček, Šufflay*, II vol. Vindobonac, 1913-1918; Farlaus: "*Illyrici sacri*" tom. I-VIII, Venetiis 1751-1819; Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko-prizrenska biscopija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1968; Radonić: "*Zapadna Europa i balkanski narodi prema Turcima u prvoj polovini XV veka*", Novi Sad, 1905.

⁸⁵² Idem, p. 348.

⁸⁵³ Idem, p. 348.

successful in this as Rome was unable to keep its promise to help them regain their lost freedom. On the contrary, the 16th-century Orthodox Church opened several Greek-language primary schools in the south,⁸⁵⁴ while similar, later, but in Slavic, were opened in Kosovo and Macedonia, setting suitable circumstances for the Greekization and Slavization of a good part of the Orthodox believers in these areas.⁸⁵⁵

The lost battle of the Uniates in Epirus, Macedonia and Dardania against Greek and Slavic churches, the Catholic Church will focus on the believers of the Catholic rite, mainly in the north, in Dardania, but also on the coast. Under the conditions of the Ottoman rule and the continuous uprisings of the Albanians against it, the efforts to save the Christian faith had for the conscious clergy not only a religious but also a patriotic meaning. By defending the Christian religion against Islamization, they aimed to remove the danger of assimilation of Albanians by the Ottoman Turks.⁸⁵⁶

And, one of those conscientious priests who will act and work towards the fulfillment of this mission appears to be Don Gjon Buzuku, who in 1555, published “*Meshari*” (Messial), in Albanian with parts translated from the gospel, both ritual and liturgy.⁸⁵⁷

“*Meshari*” will be discovered by the Albanian prelate from Gjakova, Gjon Nikollë Kazazi, one of the early writers of the North. In 1740, at the Fide Propaganda College, where Gjon Nikollë Kazazi had once been a student, he was surprised to see the book and copied a piece of ritual from it and sent it in honor of Father Guzeta, founder of the Palermo Seminary with dedication, “*Ancient Albanian Massial, completely torn from antiquity*”. Later editors of this seminar, Paul Parino and Sepë Crispi, had this passage in their hands and mention it in their writings. Then the book fell back into oblivion. From the end of the 18th century onwards, from the library of the College of Propaganda, it was forwarded to the collection of Oriental Books of Cardinal Stefano Borgia, until finally, together with these books, it was moved to the Vatican Library, where it is located under the signature *R(accolta) G(enerale) Liturgia. III. 194*, as the only specimen known to date.⁸⁵⁸

The first researches on the Albanian language monument were made by the Bishop of Arbëresh, Italy, tracer and researcher of old texts, Pal Skiroi. In 1909, Skiroi considered the work and, thanks to many years of work, published the entire text and the phonetic transliteration of the text, but failed to publish it in its entirety. Meanwhile, in 1929 Justin Rrota published three photocopies of the book in the Vatican. With the publication of some selected and commented parts of the text and with a series of ongoing studies, this researcher of grammar and old Albanian literature has helped a lot in spreading this linguistic monument.⁸⁵⁹

After the publication of “*Meshari*”, the interest in translating and publishing liturgical texts in the Albanian language continued. This is evidenced by the appearance of Lekë Matranga’s work “*Emsuamë e krishterë*”, published in 1592. Lekë Matranga (1560-1619) was from Hora of Arbëresh in Sicily and was one of the first students of St. Athanasius of Rome. In addition to its religious significance, Matranga’s “*Emsuamë e krishterë*” catechism has literary value. Because, in addition to the original text, the author also brings a poem with eight verses, with which the author invites the faithful to always attend the church.

At the same time, Catholic missionaries began coming to Albania, especially students of Loreto College, who began organizing primary schools near their convenants and parishes.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁴ Idem, p. 348.

⁸⁵⁵ Radonjić, J: “*Kurija u Južnoslovenske zemlje, XVI-XIX*”.

⁸⁵⁶ Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska bišćupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb, 1986.

⁸⁵⁷ See: “*Meshari i Gjon Buzukut (1555)*” I, II, Prishtinë, 1987.

⁸⁵⁸ More about Gjon Buzuku’s “*Meshari*” (“*Missal*”) see the complete edition of *Meshari*, “*Rilindja*”, 1978. The text is transliterated and is accompanied by a foreword by Professor Eqrem Çabej. Professor Çabej brings a detailed study not only about the value and linguistic importance of the work for the history of Albanian linguistics and culture in general, but also analyzes some of the circumstances in which the work was written, which are also of great importance for further studies.

⁸⁵⁹ “*Meshari i Gjon Buzukut 1555*”, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 7.

⁸⁶⁰ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, I, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 350.

In the course of this activity, among the distinguished was the prelate Pjetër Budi (1566-1622), from Guribardh of Mati. Budi translated and published “*Doktrina e Krishterë*” (Christian Doctrine) in 1618 and in 1621 in a joint volume “*Pasqyra e të rrëfyemit*” (Mirror of Confession) and “*Rituali roman*” (Roman Ritual). In his work, Budi also published a large number of poems, all in religious spirit with efforts made to present them in an artistic form.⁸⁶¹

Evidently, despite this activity and the beginning of the circulation of the first religious works in the Albanian language, due to a strong penetration of Islam in the Albanian lands, the situation of the Catholic Church and its believers continued to appear with difficulty and increasingly narrowing. To do something to prevent this situation, from 1662 onwards the Vatican decided to hand over religious propaganda in Eastern countries to the powerful institution it established, the “*Propaganda Fide*” (for the spread of religion) based in Rome. The new institute occasionally set up other schools for Albanian cadres, such as Fermo’s “*Illyricum College*” (1633) under the direction of Jesuit missionaries, then the “*Montoriso School*” in Rome, under the direction of Franciscan missionaries, and two schools for students and uniate rite under the direction of the Basilians. The most distinguished of these colleges attended then higher studies at the “*Urban College of Propaganda*”. They were then sent to Albania as soldiers of Fide Propaganda, who not infrequently, due to lack of knowledge of the Albanian language and the difficult circumstances, will not be able to carry out their mission in accordance with the requirements of the faithful, which were more of a practical nature than a philosophical one.⁸⁶²

Some of the Albanian prelates, such as Pjetër Budi, will write to Propaganda Fide to take into account the circumstances of Albania and send parishioners who knew the Albanian language, which created an aggravated situation between him and the Vatican as soon as it opened the suspicion that his tragic drowning in the Drin River could have been part of an assassination attempt on him by certain Vatican circles that did not allow the national spirit to prevail over the religious one.⁸⁶³

Despite these internal concerns accompanying the activity of Catholic missionaries in Albania, their performance and work will bring about the opening of the first primary schools in the Albanian language. The first school for religious studies will be opened in Kurbin, Kruja, in 1632, where 10 clerical students taught. Four years later, Franciscan missionaries opened a school in Pdhana near the Mat River. A year later, at the request of the inhabitants of Blinisht (Zadrime), the Franciscans set up a covenant and next to it a gymnasium. In 1671, the first Albanian school was opened in Janjeva, Dardania.⁸⁶⁴

Similar schools were opened in Velje of Mirdita and Shkodra. The Albanian priests themselves, who were also teachers, took care of the teaching needs for these schools. They prepared the relevant texts in the Albanian language. Many of them were religious texts, such as those translated and published by Pjetër Budi, or original works such as “*Çeta e Profetëve*”, (Prophets Company), written by Pjetër Bogdani (1625-1689).⁸⁶⁵

Some of these works were entirely didactic. Such were Frang Bardhi’s “*Fjalori latinisht-epirotisht*” (Latin-Epirotan Dictionary) (1606-1643), published in 1635, and “*Gramatika latinisht-shqip*” (Latin-Albanian Grammar) prepared by Andrea Bogdani, whose manuscript was lost during the Turkish expeditions of 1683 together with some other religious texts and dictionaries that were used in the manuscript and later lost.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶¹ Idem, p. 350.

⁸⁶² Bartl, Peter: “*Albanien. Von Mittelalter bis Gegenwart*”, Regensburg, 1995.

⁸⁶³ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, I, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 351.

⁸⁶⁴ See Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko Prizrenska BiScupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb, 1986.

⁸⁶⁵ “*Çeta e Profetëve*” (“*Band of Prophets*”) of Pjetër Bogdani is considered one of the basic works of classical Albanian literature. Because it, in addition to religious texts, also deals with issues of philosophy, but from time to time, attention is also paid to the social and historical issues of the time. Many literary texts have also found a place in this work - original creations of the author, written in a pure language, fluent style that raises it to the level of a work of literary and artistic character. The poems “*Sibilat*” (“*Sibyls*”) appear as the first lyrical poems in Albanian literature.

⁸⁶⁶ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, I, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 352,

The spread and establishment of Albanian schools in church convents together with the publication of works translated into Albanian with selected liturgical texts, initially for the needs of the Albanian Catholic clergy, but later reflecting parts of artistic creativity and this will lay the foundations for the old Albanian literature, disturbing the official Ottoman authorities, who will take measures to prevent these schools from working or closing them altogether. Out of repression some of them will change facilities and places, but not activity. Albanian priests will be able to organize some of the schools in convents, although they will often be denounced by the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the official Ottoman authorities.⁸⁶⁷

In order to preserve the spirit of commitment even in the face of these difficult circumstances, Pope Clement XI, of Albanian origin, took many measures to help the Catholic clergy in Albania. Thus, in 1703, with Pope's encouragement and help, the council of the bishops of Albania, known as the "*Council of Arben*", convened. In addition to decisions on strictly religious issues, the Council also made decisions on the spread of religious literature in the Albanian language. In 1711, at the initiative of Pope Clement XI, the Department of Albanian Language was established at the Montorio School in Rome.⁸⁶⁸ The opening of the Department of Albanian Language in Rome, which will be preceded by the activity of the "*Illyricum College*" of "*Propaganda Fide*" and that of "*St. Athanasius*" by order of the basic unit, will create a spiritual, cultural and social for the preservation of the western heritage of the Albanians as well as for its further deepening even in those difficult circumstances of the opening of Islam among the Albanians.

In the fight to give this awareness dimensions of a social turn which will be reflected in the projects for open opposition to the Ottoman occupation, it is no coincidence that some of the most conscientious representatives of the Albanian Catholic clergy, Pjetër Budi and Pjetër Bogdani, will be directly involved in this activity. The first was to demand an armed uprising from the northern Albanian highlanders, who would be led by a Western knight. And the second - by directly engaging in the Austro-Turkish war on the side of the Vienna General, Piccolomini, who with his army reached as far as Prishtina and Skopje, restoring hope to the Christian population that the Ottomans might be soon meeting their end.

Pjetër Budi, therefore, wanted a leader from abroad, as the leader and savior of the Albanians, while Pjetër Bogdani will join the one who, thanks to the war against the Ottomans, had already managed to reap a victory, similar to that of Skanderbeg more than two centuries ago. Although on the one hand Budi's project of an armed uprising with a European leader will remain only a demand (which will cost him), and on the other hand Bogdani's direct engagement with his followers alongside Piccolomini will fail, and this will have serious consequences for the Albanian population. However, their actions will show that historical twists and turns are possible and they only appear when the processes are led by intellectuals as a conscious layer of a society.

AUSTRO-OTTOMAN WAR AND THE ROLE OF ALBANIANS

The "Great Age" will nourish the Albanian memory of glory, such as the victories they reaped during the wars under the leadership of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, but at the same time reminded them of the difficult situation in which they will later become against which they had to respond so that slavery would not turn into a permanent state. And, many data show that Albanians even after Skanderbeg's death, regardless of the terror inflicted on them,

⁸⁶⁷ Gjini, Gaspër: "*Skopsko Prizrenska Biscupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1986.

⁸⁶⁸ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", I, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 353.

regardless of the severe consequences of the oppression they will face, and regardless of the stand-by coming from the countries of Western Christians, at least as far back as the first half of the century under the Ottoman yoke, will find the strength to oppose and even organize uprisings, causing much trouble to the high military men of the Porte. To extinguish those powerful expeditions, the sultans would sometimes personally lead them, such as that of 1492 against the Himariots led by Bayezid II, whose “success” was an agreement with the Himariots guaranteeing extensive local self-rule called “venoma”.⁸⁶⁹

Over time, with an increasing internal bond of resistance of the Albanian princes, allies of Skanderbeg, the Vatican and the Western countries, with an interest in the Albanians still keeping the Ottoman armies connected, so that they would have no time to turn to the West, as will happen when after re-occupying Albania the Ottoman forces will soon land on the southern shores of Italy even heading to those of Spain, will demand that this be done by inciting the Albanian uprisings in different parts of the country. Evidently, from the first half of the 16th century onwards, when Skanderbeg’s son, George I, failed to strengthen power in southern Albania, and this will happen due to a deceit by the Venetians, who in one on the one hand, encouraged the Albanians who had found refuge in Italy to land in Albania, and on the other hand, they prevented their strengthening by concluding a peace agreement with the Porte. According to the agreement, they will gain Corfu and keep Ulqin and Tivar, and the energy and anti-Ottoman mood of the Albanians will be directed not to liberate the country from them, but to prevent full establishment of the Ottoman regime in the country, especially the timars, or to gain local government (autonomy), in order to preserve their own forms of patriarchal and tribal society led by the medieval canon and its well-known codes, with which Albanians for centuries had been self-governing and a part of them will maintain this throughout the Ottoman occupation of Albania. The Vatican was convinced that Catholicism could survive only in the circumstances of such autonomous constructions, which usually appeared in the mountainous parts (in the North and Northeast of Albania and in the South), while Venice saw the account that through the Albanian “oases” outside Ottoman laws, to keep the Porte bound by the agreements by which the Republic of the Adriatic maintained supervision over some Albanian coastal cities of a very strategic nature for it.

These developments, although consistent with each other in terms of means, nevertheless pursued different goals. Because, the Holy See, in the autonomous Albanian areas saw the preservation of the factor that strengthened the spirit and spiritual determination of the Albanians towards the West and with it the presence of Catholicism was preserved in this important node of the West-East convergences. Whereas, Venice saw its use for the preservation of its economic and political interests in relation to the Ottoman Empire, even turning them into a bargaining chip as it had done during the time of Skanderbeg without hesitating to use his war in this direction.

Of the same nature, however, was Venice’s attitude towards the efforts of some European countries to launch a major uprising in Albania in the summer of 1594 against the Ottomans, in which, in addition to the Albanians, other Christians from the ranks of Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks and Bosniaks would also take part. Many Albanian leaders, in a Mati congregation, will agree to an uprising, which would be “blessed” by the Pope and aided by other Christian countries. It is known that the knights, Tomë Plezha and Mark Gjini, who were in the service of Venice, together with Bishop Nikolë Mekajshi, entered into talks with the papacy.⁸⁷⁰

However, Venice will use the well-known intrigues to thwart this attempt, as will the one that will be repeated in the same assembly in Mat after two years when the same Albanian representatives will appear in Rome with a request for help and will return empty-handed, as

⁸⁶⁹ Idem, p. 297.

⁸⁷⁰ More about the activity of Tomë Plezha, Mark Gjini, and Bishop Nikollë Mejkashi in the relations Rome-Venice see Zamputi I. In “*Dokumente të shekujve XV-XVI për historinë e Shqipërisë*” (“*Documents of the 15th-16th centuries for the history of Albania*”), 1989.

Venice will persuade the Pope to wait until the Hungarian war with the Ottomans continued, which for the West should take precedence over that of the Albanians, which was unlikely to be a great success.⁸⁷¹

Similar answers came on several other initiatives of the Albanian local assemblies, such as that of the Dukagjini assembly in Mat, in 1602, when their representatives, Nikollë Bardhi - Bishop of Sapa and Pal Dukagjini - Captain of Venice, went to Venice for help and there they will be told that “the time has not come for a general war against the Turks”. In fact, the promises of the representatives of Dukagjini were in vain that if Venice helped them with weapons in a war that would involve about 100 thousand elected Albanian men, they would not only hand over Kruja to Venice, but together they would also turn to Constantinople.⁸⁷²

The representatives of Dukagjini will also return from the visit they made to Rome empty-handed, where they made the same demands, that is, to get support for a great uprising against the Ottomans. In Rome, they were even met with some kind of distrust, as they were considered to be in the service of Venice so that the Papacy would be included in their well-known intrigues by which the interests of an anti-Ottoman uprising in Albanian lands and beyond were generally not pursued beyond Adriatic, but those of Venice were, by the need to maintain their “special” presence in those parts, always in secret agreements with the Ottomans.⁸⁷³

In the face of these circumstances, when the readiness of the Albanians to oppose the Ottomans required restraint, the conscious factor within the Albanian Catholic clergy demanded that the Venetian strategy of using the Albanians for their own needs change and the form of maintaining local self-government and supervised autonomies, as enjoyed by Malësia e Madhe (Great Highlands), Dukagjini, Mat, Mirdita and part of Gjakova Highlands, turn into inciting spaces for popular uprisings, as it was thought that inciting a war with the Ottomans and the successes of its initiators would inevitably link European Christian countries to it.

Thus, in the second decade of the seventeenth century, the Albanian prelate, Pjetër Budi,⁸⁷⁴ after the failure of several initiatives of the Albanian assemblies such as that of Mati and Dukagjini and those of a Balkan character (the assemblies of Kuçi, Prokupa and Belgrade) as well as a series of initiatives of missionaries and various captains from the West, will greatly engage himself for a war against the Ottomans. Pjetër Budi will also conjure up plans for an uprising and will send them to the Vatican and some other European countries with the promise that they would be attended by Albanians of the Christian faith and those who had accepted Islam with inclusion of the military aspects presented in detail and quite convincingly. This suggests that they might have been in close cooperation with war strategists, who were not uncommon in these parts. In 1616, with detailed plans, Budi went to Rome, hoping to find support there, where from the Vatican, in addition to the right means, would ask European countries to supply Albanians with weapons and military personnel for them to appear. as prepared as possible for a war with the Ottomans in which others would be involved. Budi hoped to meet Pope Paul V or another cardinal in Rome. This did not work for him, as it was very clear that the Holy See, despite the bravery of the Albanians to revolt, did not want to assume the role

⁸⁷¹ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, I, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 335.

⁸⁷² The Dukagjin Convention was held in the Church of St. Alexander in Dukagjini on February 15, 1602. 2656 people gathered, representatives of many Albanian provinces, mainly elders of the Northern provinces and Catholic clergy in these areas, among whom should be distinguished the Bishop of Sapa, Nikollë Bardhi and Pal Dukagjini as captains in the service of the Republic of Venice. There were also representatives from Kruja, Shkodra, Elbasan, Durrës, Myzeqeja, Kosova and Shpati. (See Thëngjilli, Petrika “*Shqiptarët midis Lindjes dhe Perëndimit 1506-1750*” (“*Albanians between East and West 1506-1750*”), Tiranë, 2003, pp. 150-153).

⁸⁷³ *Idem*, p. 154.

⁸⁷⁴ Pjetër Budi was born in Gur i Bardhë of Mati. For many years he served several bishoprics and at the age of 21 he became a priest in Kosovo, where he stayed for 12 years. The Synod charged him with the duty of vicar general. After exercising this duty for 17 years he became bishop of Sapa. During his long service, he was tasked several times by the Albanian population to represent the demands of the Albanians in Rome. Budi, while working as a priest, was also involved in translating liturgical works into Albanian, such as “*Doktrina e krishtene*” (“*Christian Doctrine*”), “*Pasqyra e të rrëfyemit*” (“*Mirror of Confession*”) and “*Rituali roman*” (“*Roman Ritual*”).

of direct instigator of a war with the Ottomans. Budi could not even meet the knight Betruchi, who was in Germany with the task of organizing volunteers from there for a war with the Ottomans.⁸⁷⁵

Five years later, Budi will again be seen staying in Rome with the same mission. On this occasion, Cardinal Gocadino will hand over the war plans and the request to be led by the Bosnian cavalryman Bertuchi, who had expressed readiness for this war and was even said to have received the consent of some European countries interested in it, such as Germany and Austria.⁸⁷⁶

Budi's plans to help a general war against the Ottomans will not be supported. Venice mingled its fingers in it again and the Pope did not give the green light for a major Albanian uprising of a Balkan nature, as in those circumstances there was no interest in such a thing.

Disappointed by the refusal and convinced that this could have been helped by a part of the Catholic clergy and the missionaries he saw in the service of Venice and the famous games he played, Pjetër Budi returned to Albania, where at the beginning of 1622 he gathered in a special assembly the Catholic clergy of the three dioceses (Zadrime, Shkodra and Lezha) and persuaded them not to accept any foreign bishops in these dioceses. And, if such were to be sent, they would be expelled from here under the pretext that they knew neither the language nor the customs of the country. This was a rebellious attitude of the Albanian prelate, which transcended the frameworks of ordinary behavior. Ten months later, Pjetër Budi, while traveling to the Great Highlands, was drowned by his enemies as he crossed the Drin River.⁸⁷⁷

The drowning of the Albanian prelate Pjetër Budi in the Drin River together with some important documents he carried, was rightly suspected on an important nature for the history of the Albanians (since it is known that he was engaged in research in the Vatican archives and archeological ones in Albania), which also speaks of the fear that the Holy See had towards the "excessive" mixing of the Albanian Catholic clergy in social and political issues, which could affect certain relations and papal agreements with the High Porte. As will be seen, after the Reformation onwards, the Vatican showed interest in the plight of the Catholic clergy in the Balkans, but also took care not to allow the spirit of Protestantism in the north, in the Ottoman-occupied areas, to give the Catholic Church a national character, even when it comes to its survival.

This is best illustrated in a letter by Domenik Andreas, dated February 1623, to Cardinal Barberino, who was investigating the case of Pjetër Budi, caliming, among other things, that the Albanian prelate "had sinned" and that those sins were related to the fact that, "he had demanded that the priests sent to Albania know the Albanian language", which should not be allowed, but that the practice of sending foreign bishops, ie from abroad, should be continued.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁵ Thëngjilli, Petrika: "Shqiptarët midis lindjes dhe perëndimit", Tiranë, 2003, p. 220.

⁸⁷⁶ Zamputi, I: "Dokumente...", Vol. III, pp. 376-377.

⁸⁷⁷ "Historia e popullit shqiptar", Vol. I, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 341.

⁸⁷⁸ See the letter that Domenik Andreas will send to investigator Barberino, quoted by Iniac Zamputi from "Documents ...", Volume III.

"After such an arduous journey by very foul times, whether for land or sea, I reached the diocese... And I understand that what some worthy people have shown me is to believe that the bishop of Zadrime, when he arrived at his bishopric held a meeting with the clergy where he said that from now on no bishops or abbots in those parts would be accepted unless they were natives and he had all the priests sign the petition and thus acted against ecclesiastical freedom. ...

Nothing less, with regret and at my immense rage I learned that after traveling, not much time after, crossing a river (called Drin), with five people he drowned in a miserable way...Not even his body could be found. May God have mercy on that soul. He has committed other crimes too...

Therefore, enlightened gentlemen, please, together with the enlightened cardinal, do not let fatuous bishops be elected, because such mistakes arise even more severely...

Therefore, it is necessary for the foreigners to continue to become bishops here, as has been the case with most of the custom..."

On 1st of February 1623

*Yours humbly,
Domenik Andrea*

The letter that Pjetër Budi sent to Cardinal Gocadino on the occasion of his second stay in Rome, where he continued to demand a war of the Albanians against the Ottomans in which European countries would be involved, certainly reveals some of the reasons why the well-known Albanian prelate, author of the *“Christian Doctrine”*, *“Mirror of Confession”* and of the *“Roman Ritual”* appeared dangerous not only to the Ottoman regime, but also to the uniate line of the Catholic clergy, which forbade any coloring of the clergy with national affiliation and especially for Venice, which was interested in exploiting the Albanians and their power at its own expense and by no means appearing to them as separate factors.

The drowning of the Albanian prelate, Pjetër Budi, in the Drin River took along a part of the anti-Ottoman fervor of the Albanians, especially those of the Catholic faith, who demanded that Albania return to a war log against them, but not its internal power, which will be put into action whenever given the chance. Half a century later, it will be the Austro-Turkish war, which included a good part of the Albanians on their side, as they will join it once it reaches their space.

Before these wars occurred, there were the Venetian-Ottoman ones of 1638-1715, which would include the Albanians, who, in their efforts to break away from the Ottoman occupation, or to maintain local self-government without subject to the timar system, still needed support from outside. Of course, in these circumstances, the efforts of the Albanians to oppose the occupiers and their readiness from the free mountainous provinces, where they maintained self-government, to mobilize certain forces for military action, were targeted by Venice, which sought to benefit from them. The occasion for such an action was the war of Crete, which lasted almost a quarter of a century (1644-1669) ending in Ottoman victory, an event that will give further impetus to the processes of Islamization of the Albanian population. Initially seeing that the Ottoman offensive was unstoppable and could lead to the rapid loss of the island, Venetians turned entirely to the Albanian factor, including as many volunteers in the Venetian army and inciting various Albanian provinces to anti-Ottoman rebellion, in so that the Ottoman army could be dispersed from Crete to the Albanian lands.

As soon as the Ottoman war for Crete began, the Republic of Venice turned a blind eye to the Albanians, inciting them to revolt. But the Albanians, who had a bad experience with Venice and its games, were not ready for any action that would suit them. Certain Catholic clergy, who were affiliated with Venice, began to move towards a movement by which a part of the Albanian territories would be placed under the jurisdiction of Venice. On this occasion, specific plans were hatched for a general uprising, but they fell into water as the Ottomans fell into disarray and took severe action against the Catholic clergy and certain activists. On this occasion, it is known that in order to escape Ottoman revenge, many Christian Albanians converted to Islam.⁸⁷⁹

However, the introduction of the Venetian army in the war against the Ottoman army (1647) to protect Crete was followed by another campaign by the Catholic clergy among the Albanians that their involvement in this war, which was propagated as pertaining to the Venetians, would create opportunities for the removal of the Ottoman invader. Seeing the mood of some independent Albanian provinces to gain power, Venice introduced numerous weapons in those parts together with masked soldiers, who began to organize Albanian units to be thrown into the uprising against the Ottoman forces. The Bishop of Durrës, Mark Skurra, was one of the main spokespersons of the Albanian uprising, who informed the Holy See that “the Kingdom of Albania was amidst very big uprisings for protection against the Turks”.⁸⁸⁰

This uprising, too, had the fate of similar ones that at that time were mostly in line with the interests of Venice, which usually ended in agreement with the Ottomans, while the Albanians were left with severe punishment or the possibility of converting to Islam - as salvation. Although this insurgent movement under the leadership of Mark Skura reportedly gathered about 7,000 insurgents and in addition to attacking the castles of Shkodra and Podgorica spread to parts

⁸⁷⁹ For more see: Hecquard, H : *“Histoire et description de la Haute Albanie ou Guegarie”*, Paris, 1858, p. 472; Jaques, E: *“Shqiptarët”*, Tiranë, p. 357.

⁸⁸⁰ See Zamputi Injac: *“Relacione...”*, Vol. II, p. 374.

of Albania - as far as Himara, it was quickly extinguished, as Venice not only failed to send its armies, as promised, but also cut off the supply of weapons, leaving the insurgents in halfway, facing the Ottoman fury.⁸⁸¹

These losses prevented the uprising in the Albanian territories for several years, as well as in the parts kept under Venetian supervision. But the Ottoman defeat at the gates of Vienna (February 12, 1683) not only turned the fate of the war in an opposite direction, from the Ottomans to the Christian European countries, but also to the enslaved peoples of southeastern Europe (Slavs, Albanians, Greeks.) rekindling hopes of liberation. The good cause for this revival was the creation of the "Holy League" in 1684, a coalition in which Austria, Poland, Venice, Malta and, after two years, Russia also participated.⁸⁸²

Of course, in this coalition empowered after the victory of Vienna, Austria was already the bearer of the new campaign with which the Ottoman forces had to be destroyed once and for all in the central part of Illyricum, exactly where the Slavs in the north and Arbërians in the south were the two main pillars to be restored. Knowing this fact, the emperor of Austria, Leopold I, as early as 1687 issued a call to these peoples to join the war of the "Holy League".

The reason why the Arbërians of the Catholic faith will join, to a large extent, the call of the Emperor of Austria, Leopold I, first of all has to do with the right of protecting the Catholic faithfuls in the Ottoman state, which the Austrian Empire had already acquired in the years 1615-1616 and secondly related to the promise that Leopold I made to the Christian peoples of Illyricum, among them Arbërians, that in case of victory their self-governing rights, freedom of religion along with privileges and rights would be guaranteed and others related to the expression and cultivation of national identity, from language to the flag.⁸⁸³

The first factor, namely Austria's right to protect Catholic believers in the European space of the Ottoman Empire, in terms of the effects it will bring, can also be assessed from two aspects: positive one - because the population of the Catholic faith, and not only, was in some ways spiritually protected, and this was important in circumstances where the Slavic and Greek Orthodox Churches exercised hegemonic and assimilative policies toward Arbërian Christians - and negatively - because that would bring rivalry between Vienna and the Holy See over the influence of the Arbërians, first in the field of preserving primacy over the Catholic Church to then be transferred to the cultural and social sphere.

In such circumstances it was more than clear that the Albanian Catholic clergy, which had already reached the point where the Catholic Church of Arbëria became synonymous with the Austrian church,⁸⁸⁴ would support the Austrian emperor's initiative for a joint war against the Ottomans. Therefore, it was also expected that as soon as the Austrian armies arrived in Nish and, on September 24, 1689, led by Count Ludovig would have won the battle of Nish, Arbërians would declare in favor of the Austrians ready to accept the protection of the Austrian Emperor. Thus, with the Austrian army in Nish divided into two directions: one towards Vidin (Bulgaria) led by the Count of Baden and the other towards Dardania, led by General Piccolomini, the Catholic clergy begin the campaign to wait for and to join the Vienna general.

Based on the sources of the time,⁸⁸⁵ on September 6, in Prishtina, Catholic believers will not only welcome Piccolomini with a simple greeting, but led by Bishops Pjetër Bogdani and

⁸⁸¹ "Historia e Shqipërisë", vëll. I, Tiranë 1965, p. 369.

⁸⁸² See Jaques, E: "Shqiptarët", Tiranë, pp. 357-358; Thënxhilli, Petrika: "Historia e Perandorisë Osmane", Tiranë, p. 178.

⁸⁸³ Rizaj, Skënder: "Kosova dhe Shqiptarët dje, sot dhe nesër", Prishtinë, 1992.

⁸⁸⁴ Yulcel, Y – Sevim, A: "Turkiye Tarihi", doc.3, p. 362.

⁸⁸⁵ Many sources have emerged about the Austro-Ottoman wars of 1683-1735 and the participation of Albanians in them, based on the relations of the Albanian prelates as well as the military and diplomatic relations of Vienna. Albanian historians I. Zamputi, S. Rizaj, and S. Pulaha appear more diligent in this work. But, their work focused on some aspects of this issue lacks a comprehensive critical treatment so that it does not appear fragmented and inconsistent. This is especially true for shedding light on what character it really had, as somewhere it turns out that Christian Albanians will be involved in its service, somewhere as an insurgent force, and somewhere as part of the liberation war that autonomous provinces trying to use this war to this purpose and the like. Also from the documents of the Austrian command the Muslim Albanians are called *Arnauts* and the Christians Albanian as *albanensen!*

Toma Rspasani, with many Christian volunteers,⁸⁸⁶ but were already waiting to join under his command and continue further in the direction of Skopje their fight against the Ottomans.⁸⁸⁷

Enthusiastically, Piccolomini was also received in Prizren. Residents of the town and the surrounding area (over 5,000), led by Archbishop Pjetër Bogdani, received him with rifle shots.⁸⁸⁸ On this occasion, Piccolomini received the leaders of the population around him, whereby they voluntarily expressed their vassalage to the emperor along with an oath of allegiance to him. The general demanded that the population lay down their arms, except for those who would be allowed to do so by German officers, after being admitted to the regular regiments.⁸⁸⁹

The commitment of the high prelate Pjetër Bogdani, on the side of the Austrians, cannot be questioned by any means. In various forms, this is evidenced by numerous sources, where he appears not only as a high ecclesiastical official but also as local authority, who described the arrival of the Austrian army and its establishment, even temporarily in Albanian areas, which after its withdrawal will have serious consequences for the Albanians themselves, as liberation from Ottoman violence. However, it remains unclear as to how much and how was he involved in the conduct of the war itself. From some sources it can be understood that in advance, based on an agreement with the Austrians, attended also by the bishop of the Orthodox Church, Arsenie III Cernojevic, he pledged to form an Albanian police force that would join the Austrian and similar troops, although meritorious ecclesiastical sources do not accept this and this is understandable as it was forbidden to the clergy.⁸⁹⁰

But the information that the Ottoman authorities will treat him with great harshness and contempt, whether in the center of Prizren they will publicly beat him and humiliate him in the eyes of the world, or when after his death they will exhume him and throw the corpse to the dogs, shows that he had become an important authority, which had to be demolished somehow, by all means, which explains the support that Christian Albanians and their affiliation to Western civilization in general enjoyed, despite the fact that some of them had accepted Islam, though as will be seen, it was used rather as a means to escape discrimination or to create social privileges than to turn into spiritual obedience.

Be as it may, on the one hand, the penetration of the Austrian army into the depths of the Albanian lands and the joining by a large part of the population, not only of the Catholic faith,

⁸⁸⁶ Military documents of the time state that 6,000 Christian soldiers (albanensen) joined Piccolomini in Prishtina, but some other information from Venice confirms the pro-Austrian position of some Albanians with what is said that Albanians (Arnauts) and other peoples of those provinces, Turks (Muslims), as Christians, were in agreement with General Piccolomini to submit to the protection of the Austrian emperor". (See: Zamputi, I – Pulaha, S: "*Dokumente...*", p. 226 and 293, and Rizaj, S "*Kosova...*", p. 56)

⁸⁸⁷ Rizaj, Skënder: "*Kosova dhe Shqiptarët dje, sot dhe nesër*", Prishtinë, 1992, p. 57.

⁸⁸⁸ Data of the Austrian and Venetian commands mention the presence of Pjetër Bogdani and his volunteers, whose number ranges from five thousand to eight thousand insurgents from Kosova. (See Rizaj, Skënder: "*Kosova...*", pp. 57-59).

⁸⁸⁹ Zamputi, I – Pulaha, S : "*Dokumente...*", pp. 305-306.

⁸⁹⁰ See Gjini, Gasper: "*Skoposko Prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb, 1986, pp. 174-175, describing the report that Pjetër Bogdani sent to the Congregation from the end of 1685, in which there is also mention of the Austro-Turkish war as well as the proposal of his Catholic believers, about 300 of them, that he should lead them to capture the castle of Novo Berdo, but which he had not accepted on the grounds that he was a prelate and not a military man. Pjetër Bogdani's non-participation in military activities during the Austro-Turkish war can also be seen from the book of Odette Marquet "*Pjetër Bogdani – letra dhe dokumente*", Tiranë, 1997, in which the letters that Bogdani sent to "*Propaganda Fide*" are presented. This book also contains some letters from the Vatican Secret Archive. Bogdani talks about the consequences of the war, especially the violence that will be exercised by Turkish units, as revenge. He also talks about the public punishment that will be done to him in Prizren on the market day by the Pasha, but nowhere does he talk about direct military activities. His nephew, Gjergj Bogdani, in a report to the cardinals on the day of Pjetër Bogdani's death, on December 6, 1689, admits that Bogdani had gone to General Piccolomini in Shkup to encourage the fighting soldiers, but was there ill with the plague and had just returned to Prishtina and had died (page 509). That Pjetër Bogdani, even without any active participation in the Austro-Turkish war, which was reasonable knowing that a prelate was forbidden from any political and military action, was influential, can be seen from the letter that his nephew, Gjergj Bogdani, a missionary in Janjeva and Administrator of Prishtina and Vuçitërna, had sent to "*Propaganda Fide*" on December 20, 1698, where he tells of the body exhumed by Peter Bogdani by the Turks, which was thrown to the dogs while still holding uterus above the head (p. 516).

but also of those who had already accepted Islam,⁸⁹¹ and on the other hand the emergence of Mustafa Pasha Koprulu (Köprülü), the powerful Ottoman vizier of Albanian descent, in the role of restoring the Albanian space under the yoke of the Ottoman occupation, under which it will stay for two more centuries and in whose ranks many loyal Albanians of the Porte will join, among others, will open a tragic chapter of Albanians' direct involvement in the war between East and West, either in defense of Western civilization or in the interests of the East.

Sources of the time testify to this inter-Albanian war on the basis of religious affiliation, as evidenced by the great scale of the disasters that Albanians will face, either in the event of the penetration of the Austrians, when the retreating Ottoman units will burn entire Albanian villages, or when the Austrians withdraw leaving behind desolate land, which will turn even more desolate after the Turks return and they begin punishing Austrian collaborators,⁸⁹² resulting in the displacement of a large part of the Albanian population of the Christian faith from the northern areas, leaving together with the Austrian army.

Various data show that after Skanderbeg's death, the Austrian-Turkish wars, which will last for about half a century, will forever deprive the Albanian ethnicity in the north and northeast of a good part of the population, which will head north and settle in parts of Austria from Banat, Srem and as far as Ukraine.⁸⁹³

To make matters worse, during this displacement, the Albanians of the Orthodox faith, and also a Catholic part, from which the family of the leader of the Serbian uprising Karadjordje and the royal Karadjordjević family came from,⁸⁹⁴ will mostly go after Patriarch Arsenie III Cernojevic and will be treated as Serb population.⁸⁹⁵ Skënder Riza says that Serbian propaganda has helped this misunderstanding created by the interpretation of the word "Serbian", which according to Ottoman, Serbian, Greek and Russian sources has included Albanians of the Orthodox faith, while Albanians (*arnavud*, *albanese*, *albana*) implied only Albanians of the Catholic faith, with Islamized Albanians named as Turks.⁸⁹⁶

In addition to the first emigration, provoked by the Ottoman-Austrian wars of 1689-91, as well as its known consequences for the Albanian ethnicity (Christians, but also Muslims being involved in a fratricidal war), with similar consequences will be that of 1737-9, between the Ottomans and the Austrians, with many of those attending the fight were of Albanian ethnicity. In fact, it began on July 19, 1737, when the Austrian Feldmarshal Sekendor of Tersice near Nish issued a call to the Christian population (Catholic and Orthodox) to join the war against the Ottomans. Evidently, as in the case of the first war led by Piccolomini forty years before, this

⁸⁹¹ On the participation of Albanians of the Muslim faith in the ranks of the Austrian army see the numerous reports included by Pulaha, S: "The resistance of the Albanian people against the Ottoman rule from the 16th century to the beginning of the 18th century" (Ottoman documents) ("*Qendresa e popullit shqiptar kundër sundimit osman nga shek. XVI deri në fillim të shek. XVIII*"), Tiranë, 1978, Zamputi, I – Naçi S – Shkodra, Z: "*Burime të zgjedhura për historinë e Shqipërisë*" ("*Selected sources for the history of Albania*"), III, Tiranë, 1962.

⁸⁹² Gaspër, Gj: "*Skopsko Prizrenska biScupija kroz stoljeća*", Zagreb. A relation which the Albanian prelate from Gjakova, Gjon Nikolle Kazazi, in 1743, sent to Propaganda Fide, among other things, speaks about the harsh repressive measures that the Turks have taken against the Albanian population after the departure of the Austrians. Kazazi talks about whole ruined villages and the murder of Catholic parishioners (p. 80).

⁸⁹³ According to Austrian sources, the number of Albanians displaced from the parts mentioned in Albania reaches up to twenty thousand. This is also confirmed by the sources of the Vatican and those of Venice. See H. Gera: "*Die Kaiserlichen in Albanien 1689*", Vienna, 1888; C. Contanrini: "*Storia della guerra di Leopoldi primo imperadore e de principi collogati contra il Turco dall 1683-fino alla pace*", Venedik, 1710.

⁸⁹⁴ Milorad Bošnjak-Slobodan Jakovljević: "*Karadorđevići – skrivena istorija*", Gornji Milanovac, 2007.

⁸⁹⁵ Serbian historiography has made constant efforts to manipulate both the Austro-Ottoman war and the displacement of the local population, trying to minimize the participation of Albanians in that war by presenting it only as an insignificant part of it, while exaggerating the role of orthodox Christians, seen mainly as Serbs, especially the displacement, which will be presented as of devastating proportions, because from Kosovo, for fear of Turkish revenge, allegedly left most of the population and the country will be occupied by Albanians who will come down from the mountainous regions of Albania and populating it instead! Among the Serbian authors who will nurture this thesis are: J. Cvijić: "*Osnove za geografiju i geologiju Makedonije i Stare Srbije*", 1906; Djordjeviq Vladan: "*Die Albanensen und die Grossmächte*", Leipzig, 1913; B. Nusić: "*Kosovo – opis zemle i naroda*", Novi Sad, 1962; D. Popović: "*Velika seoba srba*", Beograd, 1954; "*Istoria naroda Jugoslavije*", knjiga 2, Beograd, 1960.

⁸⁹⁶ See Rizaj, S.: "*Kosova dhe Shqiptarët dje, sot dhe nesër*", Prishtinë, 1992.

time too, the call of the Austrian feldmarshal was answered by a good part of the Christian Albanians (Catholic and Orthodox) from the northern tribes, mainly the Kelmendi, but also from the tribes of Hoti, Piper, Vasojevic, and Gruda. They will be led by the Orthodox Patriarch Shakabenta, some of whom were involved in the wars between Turkey and Venice from 1715-1718, from which their odyssey will continue from the Great Highlands to parts of Peshter and Rugova.⁸⁹⁷

Since the fate of the war, this time too, was not on the side of the Austrians, who, after two years, will lose, while the Austrian Feldmarshal Sekdender, in retreat, left at the mercy of not only Albanian fighters (Catholic and Christians) and others, it was expected that the return of the Ottoman army to the parts that the Austrian army had held for two years would be followed by terror against those who had sided with the Austrians. For the Kelmendis and members of the northern tribes this meant another exodus. It is known that the unsafe road to the north after the Austrian army was taken by about ten thousand Christian Albanians, mostly from Kelmendi, under the supervision of the Orthodox Patriarch Shakobeta and the Catholic Archbishop M. Suma. They moved to Srem as refugees and after many vicissitudes settled in the villages of Hrtkovci, Nikinci and Mishkoc, where they remained forever. It is estimated that in the part of Austria-Hungary, 1600 Albanians arrived from 10 thousand fleeing from their lands (Peshter and Rugova). Most of them remained on the road, whether massacred by the Ottoman army's retaliation, or by the diseases and famine accompanying them during the six-week exodus before they crossed the Sava River.⁸⁹⁸

ORTHODOX RITE AND THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

The centuries-old efforts of the Albanians, in their clashes between the West and the East, to always commit themselves to the consequences of the dividing line of civilizations that appeared since the time of Emperor Theodosius, in the fourth century not to turn into a civil war and especially not to be detached from Western space as their multifaceted interest, would be deficient without reflecting the perpetual war taking place even within the Orthodox rite, that it preserves the spirit of connection with the West. This will also happen during the reign of Jusitnian up to the Bulgarian conquests, when the administrative (eastern) affiliation will be balanced with a Western ecclesiastical affiliation, instead of a confrontation that appeared in the relations between Rome and Constantinople after their separation from 1054 onwards. In this way it will be very difficult as on its way stood the Byzantine dogma, on the one hand, and the lack of autocephaly on the other, which prevented within the Orthodox rite church identity to be identified with national interests, as will happen with the Slavs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Romanians and others in Illyricum in the circumstances of the Ottoman conquests and further developments that led to the creation of nation-states.

⁸⁹⁷ More about the participation of the Kelmendis and members of several other tribes in the Austro-Turkish war of 1737-1739 see: Radonić, Jovan: *"Rimska kurija i južnoslovenske zemlje od XVI do XIX veka"*, Beograd, 1950; Kostić, Mita: *"Ustanak Srba i Arbanasa u Staroj Srbiji protiv Turske 1739"* I, Skopje, 1929; Zefiq, Frok: *"Shqiptarët Kelmendas në Hrtkovci e Nikinci 1737-1379"*, Zagreb, 1979.

⁸⁹⁸ See: Kuhać, Š, Franjo: *"Die Klimentiner in Slavonien"*, Zagreb, 1894; Ivanišević, Mate: *"Hrvatski Albanci ili Klementinci"*, Zagreb, 1914; Kostić, Mita: *"Arnauti u Sremu"*, Beograd, 1923; Popović, K, Sava: *"Arnauti u Sremu"*, 1939; Šimrak, Janko: *"Albanci iz Nikinaca u Zavodu"*, Zagreb, 1931 and Zefiq, Frok: *"Shqiptarët Kelmendas në Hrtkovci dhe Nikinci (1737-1997)"*, Zagreb, 1997.

Even during the time of the Despotate of Epirus and the “*Kingdom of Arbëria*”, under the Anjouan dynasty, when the first structures of Arbërian statehood will practically appear in the circumstances of the dissolution of Byzantium, the Arbërian gentry, and later princes, will make efforts that the ecclesiastical divisions should not affect their determination that the battle for the throne, regardless of their nature and level of vassalage, go through exclusive affiliation, especially if it was related to Eastern affiliation, as had happened at the final stage of the disintegration of Byzantium, when its return meant at once war against the West. .. Whereas, even then, from this part of the world, the first signs of closeness with the Ottomans will be noticed, which will soon turn into forms of open vassalage to them. The full establishment of Ottoman rule from the second half of the 15th century, when Constantinople fell to the Ottomans and thus formally ended the last Byzantine edifice, would severely aggravate the East-West ecclesiastical division. .. Instead of being the opposite, that is, to jointly concentrate against the same enemy, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, always under the well-known adaptive motto of social and political circumstances, whether under an occupier, as “where the believer is the church is too” accepted the power of the sultan, which will be placed under the supervision of the Sublime Porte, which as a reward to the Orthodox Christians will guarantee protection and freedom of religion. In this respect, the acceptance of autocephaly by the Sultan turned the Orthodox Church into a close collaborator, because it, in order to maintain spiritual power, gained the right to collect taxes from its believers, meaning being rewarded with a good percentage by the sultan for the services rendered. The strategy of accepting vassalage from Slavic and Greek princes will also help. They will be among the first to submit to the sultan and will be in open service against the Catholic countries and the peoples of the Catholic faith in their defensive war against the Ottoman invasions, where the Rascians will be greatly distinguished by their participation against Hunyadi and other Ottoman campaigns to the West. As it is known, the Rascian troops will be at the forefront of the attacks during the capture of Constantinople, fighting with dedication for its demolition, but also in many other battles in the European space.⁸⁹⁹

The time of vassalage and the acceptance of the Sublime Porte authority, found the Arbërians of the Orthodox faith facing Slavization or Hellenization (Hellenization), since both enjoyed autocephaly and the right to practice the liturgy in their own languages. Thus, the Arbërians of the Orthodox rite, in the absence of liturgy in their own language, will also be faced with a strict prohibition of any action in this regard, regardless of the fact that it may be in the interest of keeping the believers in its ranks.

This will be reflected in the area of ancient Macedonia, Dardania and Epirus, where the eastern rite almost had a general extension, but where the language of the liturgy (Greek or Old Church Slavonic), influenced the definition of Greek or Slavic identity, which, under later circumstances will be converted into national consciousness. .. And this will be one of the reasons why a good part of the Albanian population in the circumstances when remaining within the framework of Orthodoxy, when the social status of the race was degraded twice, especially threatening its existence, in order to avoid the position of double submission, without any hesitation, outside the spaces of self-government through the canon, in the semi-urban and urban parts, accepted Islam, as the Bogomils in Bosnia will do, being also very much threatened by the orthodox church hegemony. This will happen in the extreme parts, outside the influence of the episcopacies which, even as Orthodox, were taken as part of the Albanian autochthony, such as that of Ohër and later of Durrës, under whose jurisdiction a part of large dioceses of Albania fell.

⁸⁹⁹ More about the involvement of Serbs on the side of the Ottomans see Jireček, Konstantin: “*Historia e serbëve*”, Tiranë; Jorga, J: “*Geschichte des osannischen Reichs*”, Gotha, 1909; Hammer, J. V: “*Istorija osmanskog carstva*”, I, II, Zagreb, 1986; Chacondil, L. N: “*L’Histoire de la degandence l’Empire et Etablissement de celyy des Turcs*”, Paris, 1962; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002; Murzaku, Th: “*Historia e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë, 1973; Plasari, Aurel: “*Skënderbeu*”, Tiranë, 2010;

From the beginning of the 17th century, after the reorganization of the church that would be conditioned by the independence of the Russian church, the Patriarchate of Istanbul, which still, due to the trust it enjoyed by the Sublime Porte, would consider itself the spiritual leader of Orthodoxy, with an “imperial mandate” will turn to full Greekization. This will arouse resentment in the Slavic, Romanian and Bulgarian Rascian churches. The latter, in order to free themselves from the spirit of the Hellenistic pressure exerted by the Greek church, with the help of the patriarch of Istanbul, began to establish special ties with Rome. The Rascian Church showed a tendency to associate with that of Russia. The Ohër Patriarchate, which also oversaw the dioceses in the Arbërian areas, initially designated by the Ottoman administration as the Sanjak of Albania, would later branch into the Ohër Sanjak and cover the area from Ohër, Dibra and middle Albania going as far as Kruja and Lezha,⁹⁰⁰ had many reasons to oppose the greed of the patriarch of Istanbul. Not only because it denied the existence of the Bulgarian and Albanian identities, but also because it, in order to maintain its power, sought to get as far away as possible from the Western spirit, which in Europe, with the emergence of Humanism and Renaissance, had begun to show flourishing signs, being followed with interest even on the eastern shores of the Adriatic.

In such circumstances, when the European Enlightenment ideas affected the western countries of Illyricum, in Voskopoja, in a craftsmen city, mainly inhabited by the Albanian population of the Orthodox faith with a significant minority of Vlachs, whose presence was culturally spread in many parts increasingly interconnected with the ethnic identity of the majority population,⁹⁰¹ not by accident, a cultural circuit will emerge, reflecting the spirit of Western civilization. Thus, as early as 1710, a Greek-language college was established in the city, though outside of Hellenic influence, and ten years later, the city was also equipped with a printing press, which gave Voskopoja intellectuals a material basis for rapid cultural development. In 1744, with the support of Joasaph, a group of intellectuals founded the “*New Academy*”, with an educational curricula equal to that of European high schools.⁹⁰²

The first rector of the Academy was Sevast Leontiadhi from Kostur, who graduated from the University of Padova. After him, Theodor Kavalioti from Voskopoja will become its rector, a prominent thinker of the 18th century, an ardent supporter of Leibniz’s philosophical views, who will also be the first translator of the “*New Testament*” into Albanian. In 1770 he published a dictionary of the *Greek-Aromanian-Albanian* language and with this, two hundred years after the appearance of Buzuku’s “*Meshari*” in Albanian, he laid the national foundations for the Albanian Orthodox Church, which will wait for two more centuries before declaring autocephaly depositing it to the overall Albanian cultural identity, thus presenting another historic victory in the war against Greek hegemony and the well-known megaloidia “that every Greek is Orthodox and every Orthodox is Greek”.

In 1779, during the Russian-Ottoman war, when the Orthodox clergy and the parish of Voskopoja supported the Himariots, who revolted against the Ottoman rulers that same year, it is likely that this, as a plot or similar intrigue, could have been linked at the same time with the support of the Russian-Turkish war, so that the Voskopoians could be taken as a trigger for an attack on them. The Sublime Porte took the opportunity to incite the *derebeys* (city guards) against Voskopoja, allegedly dissatisfied with the delays in the payment of the amount

⁹⁰⁰ More about the church organization in the Albanian space in the circumstances of the Ottoman occupation see Gjini, Gaspër: “*Skopsko-prizrenska biskupija kroz stoljeća*”, Zagreb 1986; Radonjić, J: “*Rimska kurija i jugoslovenske zemlje od XVI-XIX veka*”, Beograd, 1950; Mirdita, Zef: “*Krishtërizimi ndër shqiptarë*”, Prizren-Zagreb, 1998.

⁹⁰¹ See more about the Vlach presence in the Albanian environment from the Middle Ages to the newer time at Mirdita, Zef: “*Vlasi u albanskoj historiografiji*”, Zagreb 2004, pp. 59-73; Bartl, Peter: “*Quellen und Materialien zur albanischen Geschichte in 17 und 18 Jahrhundert*”, Munchen, 1979; Rizaj, Skënder: “*Uloga Vlaha primicura u rudarstvu Kosova i Srbije u XV i XVI veku*”, in Simposium II/1983, pp. 135-138; Frashëri, Kristo: “*Etnogjeneza e Shqiptarëve*”, Tiranë, 2013.

⁹⁰² “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, First Volume, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 387.

contracted with the Voskopojars for the protection of the city, thus attacked, looting and burning it.⁹⁰³

The city suffered a similar collapse in 1772 and 1789. In addition, the Istanbul Patriarchate took severe measures against Voskopoja in the field of culture. Previous professors were expelled and replaced by professors affiliated with the Patriarchate, in order for the spirit of the Academy to serve Hellenizing interests. Thus, in one of the texts compiled by Dhaniel, the representative of the Greek-Orthodox chauvinist current, the author invited Albanian, Vlach and Bulgarian students to give up their “barbaric language” and learn Greek only. In these circumstances, the Academy was unable to continue its activity.⁹⁰⁴

The destruction and downfall of Voskopoja and the closing of the “*New Academy*”, although by some sources it had been called “*a premeditated revenge of Muslim Albanians under the influence of Orthodox Athens*”, determined not to allow a “Greek edge” and similar, speaks of the opposite. It rather spoke of the fear of the Istanbul Patriarchate and the Sublime Porte itself from the spread and influence of the Western Enlightenment spirit on the Orthodox factor, appearing outside the influence of the Greek Church and its hegemony, especially to an Orthodox diocesan church such as Ohër, which supported the liberation movements of the peoples of the Balkans, primarily the Bulgarians and Albanians, as well as their national identity, which had to be reflected in allowing the use of the national language in religious masses and liturgy.

Continuation of efforts to translate ecclesiastical books by students or associates of Kavalioti even after the destruction of Voskopoja and the closure of the “*New Academy*”, will be proof of this. Thus, in the fight against the Greek-Orthodox reaction of the Istanbul Patriarchate, which banned the translation of ecclesiastical books into the national languages of populations of the Orthodox faith, some Albanian clerics not only translated them into Albanian, but published the translated books in a special alphabet invented specifically for the Albanian language that did not resemble the Greek alphabet.

One of them was the Bishop of Durrës, Grigor Durrsaku. He translated into Albanian “*Dhjata e re*” (*The New Testament*) (1761). The traces of Grigor Durrsaku were followed by Dhaskal Todhëri (Theodor Haxhi Filipi), who translated into Albanian “*The New Testament*” and parts of the liturgy. In addition, Dhaskal Todhëri tried to establish a printing house in Elbasan to publish Albanian works. But then, in 1805, as he was returning from Venice, together with the printing press materials, on the way to Elbasan, he was killed by unknown people, without being able to open the Albanian printing house.⁹⁰⁵

The assassination of Dhaskal Todhëri, similar to that of the tragic drowning of Pjetër Budi in the Drin River, after asking for prelates who knew the Albanian language to celebrate Mass in it, will not stop the engagement of the Albanian Catholic clergy and, later, the Albanian Orthodox ones, towards the emancipation of the Albanians and their national awakening in the spirit of Western civilization, a spirit that in the following centuries will be fully accepted by the national revival and will be included in their programs for national liberation and independent state.

CHAPTER FOUR

TANZIMAT REFORMS AND EFFORTS FOR MODERNIZATION

⁹⁰³ Idem, p. 390.

⁹⁰⁴ Idem, p. 390.

⁹⁰⁵ Idem, p. 391.

TANZIMAT AND MOVEMENTS FOR INDEPENDENCE

The beginnings of the nineteenth century found the Ottoman Empire in a whirlwind of decisive struggles to secure the future no longer being protected from the detachments and shrinking that came with the constant wars it waged with Russia in the east and mostly lost with consequences, though aiming to undertake internal change, which would cause its outdated and mostly rusty mechanisms to be replaced by those the ones that had already begun to be used in the West. Feudal despotism and religious obscurantism had to be replaced by constitutional monarchy. This was already a common position of the Sultanate and of those European powers, which were interested to see the Ottoman Empire changing by means of comprehensive internal reforms to restore the power it had in accordance with the changes of the time.

Before the moment came for the Ottoman Empire, at least formally, to start reforms towards its modernization, done in line with the proclamation of "*Hat-i Sherif*"⁹⁰⁶ attaining an institutional shape through "*Hat-i Humayan*",⁹⁰⁷ it had to pass the test of this challenge with two extremely difficult internal confrontations. First it had to do away with the Janissaries and their enormous power, which had long since begun to become a serious obstacle to central power. And the second - it was related to the settlement of accounts with the disobedient pashas, first with Mahmut Pasha Bushatli of Shkodra and Osman Pazvanoglu in Vidin, and mostly with Ali Pasha of Janina, who, as local despots, with their efforts to become independent from the Porte, became even more dangerous, as it further attracted separatist movements in Illyricum, which Russia, but also other powers, despite the commitments they made to protect the central power of the Porte, such as those that would be formulated in the Paris Peace Agreement of 1856, when the Ottoman Empire would be admitted to the coryphaeus of the great powers of Europe and its territorial integrity would be guaranteed, they made great efforts to exploit them to expand their influence in this part.⁹⁰⁸

And, both of these actions, in addition to the consequences they will have for further developments in the European part of the Ottoman Empire towards the promotion of nationalisms and movements for the secession of Christian peoples (Serbs, Greeks, Montenegrins, Romanians and Bulgarians), will at the same time affect the relations of the Ottoman Empire with the Albanians from close cooperation on certain issues considered to be of common interest, to disagreements and objections even accompanied by uprisings. The question of why these changes were seen with distrust and even opposition was that the destruction of the janissary order, on the one hand, meant the deprivation of an important military institution, where for three centuries Albanians were among the main participants in that power and in many cases they even directed it. On the other hand, the removal of the pashaliks, initially that of Shkodra and Janina, also deprived them of the important local power

⁹⁰⁶ "*Hat-i Serif-i*" was drafted by the Grand Vizier, Mustafa Rashit Pasha, who was one of the leading reformers of the time. On November 3, 1839, he was solemnly proclaimed by Sultan Mejid in the palace called *Gulhane* (Rose Hall) and according to that ceremony, it was named "*Hat-i Serif-i Gulhana*", or "*The Holy Decree of Gulhana*". According to this decree, the order of the Sipahis is removed in favor of the *kiflik* (astate), a form of private property which can be possessed by every citizen of the Empire, regardless of religion or race. With this law even Christians gained the right to property. The decree states, among other things: "*From now on, complete security will be offered to all my subjects (citizens), Muslims, and rajas (Christians), their honor and property... From now on, from the largest to the smallest in the country, from my vizier to the simple shepherd, everyone will possess the property at will of which no one can deprive him.*"

⁹⁰⁷ "*Hat-i Hymayan-i*" was proclaimed in Istanbul in 1856 and marks the most important step of the Ottoman Empire towards the transition to a constitutional monarchy. This document proclaimed religious equality, which formally deprived the Islamic religion of its primacy, but at the same time deprived Christians and Jews of the right to self-government, which they had exercised until then, and helped to establish religious and linguistic freedoms, and also determine the cultural degree during local government.

⁹⁰⁸ See Castellan, Georges: "*Historia e Ballkanit*", Tiranë, 1991, pp. 241-255; Glen, Misha: "*Historia e Ballkanit 1804-1999*", Tiranë.

enjoyed by the Albanian feudal lords, who had long since built an almost independent economic and administrative authority, which not only had to pass into the hands of the central government, but the dispersal of their power had to be done by distributing it to the Christian population, which was a minority in their ethnic space, though in the new circumstances, it gained great power, especially when the Empire will accept that spiritual and cultural care for the Slav-Orthodox population will be transferred to Russia and for the Catholic population to Vienna.⁹⁰⁹

It was, therefore, about two issues that fundamentally affected, on the one hand the relations of the Albanians with the Ottoman Empire, and on the other, the internal Albanian relations. The latter were extremely sensitive to the fact that they were divided into three religions (the majority in Islam and a minority in Christianity belonging to the two rites, that of the eastern church under Constantinople and the western one under the Vatican), with further disintegrated caused by religious supervision (in the concrete case of the Orthodox from Russia and the Catholics from Austria), practically meaning internal dissension and direct endangerment of their ethnicity by the neighbors, whom the Albanian Christians had begun to appropriate for their nationalist purposes, greatly Hellenizing or Slavicizing them.

This development will almost inevitably affect the processes of birth and strengthening of Albanianism,⁹¹⁰ as a need to express national identity, for the deposits needed for social and political projects against the challenges of the time faced by the Empire, but also as a response to the Greek “*megali idea*”⁹¹¹ and great-Serbian hegemonistic projects appearing following the Garašanin’s “*Načertanije*”,⁹¹² which directly threatened the Albanian ethnicity and its existence.

The role of defense and counter-response will often bring Albanians into absurd situations, because protecting their interests, viewed from the point of maintaining vital interests, meant opposing the spirit of reform - such as the resistance to centralism that ruined traditional local government, while mostly clashing with them, especially upon demanding equal treatment with the rest.

Undoubtedly, the challenge of the already powerful janissaries outside the oversight and that of the disobedient pashaliks, which in some way were interconnected and complemented what appeared to be rebellion against the central government on the basis of immune feudal despotism by any positive social and political change, required a dedicated action from above and with a strong hand. The reason for this was not only because the return of the central authority strengthened it from within, but it also had to do with the obstruction of the external factor interested in using the pashaliks for its weakening from within, to begin with them the process of its supervised dissolution into various parts.

Of course, the challenge of comprehensive reforms, especially economic and social ones, as a response to major problems already accumulated from within, which required quick and comprehensive solutions, will find the real supporter with the emergence of Sultan Selim III, who spent most of his youth locked in the golden cage of the imperial palace, where he was allowed to meet some high-ranking people, as well as foreigners, who had convinced him of the

⁹⁰⁹ See Skendo, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000;

⁹¹⁰ About *Albanianism* as a motto of the Albanian national awakening and return to the program of the National Revival see: Skendo, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000; Clayer, Nathalie: “*Në fillet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009.

⁹¹¹ The “*Megali Idea*” or “*Great Idea*” would appear in November 1844 by the Greek Prime Minister N. Koletis, demanding the re-creation of a Byzantine Empire of which Greece would be the bearer. This project included almost all parts of Greece and the central Balkans in accordance with the scope of Orthodoxy. In fact, this large Greek hegemonic project aimed at occupying a large part of Albania (up to the Shkumbin River), Macedonia, and a part of Bulgaria.

⁹¹² “*Načertanije*” was proclaimed by Serbian Foreign Minister Ilija Garašanin and relied on the so-called Serbian historical right over most of the Balkans in line with the medieval kingdom of Dušan. According to Garašanin, Serbia should take the role of Slavic Piedmont in the Balkans and unite them into one large state, which would have access to two seas (Aegean, Adriatic).

necessity of reforms by of which the Empire would gain opportunities to be revived in accordance with the spirit of the time.⁹¹³

When Selim III came out of captivity, he had no experience of worldly affairs, but was already an ardent fighter for change. He was determined to restore the authority of the state within the country and make it regain itself as a great power alongside the rest of the time with which it had to be measured incessantly. Since, during the first four years of his reign, the Ottoman Empire was at war with the Habsburgs and it was not the time to start reforms, he waited until 1794, when he announced his plans for “*Nizam-i-Cedit*” (new military order).

The essence of this plan had to do with the creation of a modern army, trained mainly by French officers according to the achievements of military science, and would be in line with the challenges of the time with which the Empire was increasingly confronted. To carry out this important project on which the future of the Empire depended, the Sultan asked the Grand Vizier to send high-ranking civil servants reports (*layiha*) on the reforms thought to have been made. Seventeen of these documents are known, dealing mainly with the problems related to the janissaries and the *sipahis* with all the financial consequences related to their organization. A series of decrees (*khatt-i sherif*) were issued to bring these ideas to life, where *Nizam-i Cedit*, also known as the special corps of troops, was of particular importance.⁹¹⁴

Although the military challenge was the Empire’s first test of survival, confronting the army’s top janissaries and senior officers was not only an uneasy task, but it posed great and unpredictable risks because this military order, which had great merits in the past to strengthen the Empire, was associated not only with the privileged classes of the Empire, who demanded that time be stopped along with its development, but were also associated with certain social mentalities, belonging to the internal cultural and spiritual cohesion. The spiritual mentors of this military order were the powerful Bektashi order and several other *Shiite* sects, which included a large part of the population. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the young Reni faced a great and uninterrupted campaign to prevent it, a campaign that even led to some revolts of military units, followed by rebellions..⁹¹⁵

In fact, the campaign to thwart the new military order, proclaimed by Sultan Selim III, was an attempt at war or death of obsolete despotic-obscurantist structures, which, with the deformation of the *Sipahi* order and the formation of the *kifliks*, eventually lost the platform on which it stood and raised their powerful authority from where for over three centuries they had led the Ottoman Empire from great successes to the final setbacks and failures, which, if they continued to be maintained would seriously threaten its foundations. These structures were not ready for any change, especially giving up the *sipahi* property system, where they had the main support, although it was more than clear that the discrepancies between a society of yesterday and today were so great and visible, so much so that an internal collapse threatened with severe consequences not only for the Ottoman Empire. The Janissaries appeared as their last and only branch where they could be caught, even though their time had already passed. Pride and former glory not only did not help them, but also hindered them, as the central authority they had set up was looking for other fighters, subject to military discipline and political oversight from a center. In order not to end up in an open revolt with the old structures, the sultan was careful with the reforms in the army. He justified the behavior of foreign experts (French and German) by modernizing military units and mobilizing them in accordance with technological developments. Thus, under the direction of Western officers, he formed annex corps: mortars, mines, logistics, and others, which gave the traditional army a new look. Following this step, Sultan Selim went even further in organizing the army, setting the training order in the European way by the French experts, but also by the English and German ones. European experts were given access to new soldiers recruited by *ayani* “provincial” rulers and agents, mostly in parts of Anatolia. In

⁹¹³ Glenny, Misha: “*Historia e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 3.

⁹¹⁴ See Castellan, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë, p. 246.

⁹¹⁵ Idem.

September 1794 they settled in Levend Çiflik, outside the walls of the capital, and in 1801 their number exceeded a few thousand. A year later, a real recruitment system came into force in Anatolia, after which *Nizami Jedit* numbered about 22,000 soldiers and 1870 officers, half of whom were in Istanbul and the other half in Anatolia.⁹¹⁶

The rise of *Nizami-i-Cedit* and their rapid strengthening as a special corps, whose power no longer depended on the center but rather on *ayans* and *pashas*, created another “trigger” not only to be opposed, but even to fight it along with the package of social reforms, such as those renouncing the *sipahi* property order of and the return of *kifliks*.

That the Janissaries wished to remain in the old and untouchable shell, this will first and foremost be seen when they, in 1801, just a short time after the New Order began to be built, will kill the beloved governor of Belgrade’s Pashalik, Haji Mustafa, loyal viceroy of the reformist Sultan, openly declaring war on all attempts to change the situation where the conservative Ottoman elite in cooperation with the Islamic fanatical clergy showed negligence to any change that was in the spirit of economic and technological achievements, which were already happening in other European empires and keeping outside them was not possible. With the assassination of the Belgrade governor and the developments that will take place over the next four to five years in this important Serbian-dominated Pashalik, perhaps unintentionally, the Janissaries opened a process to be called historic and unstoppable - that of the explosion of nationalist and separatist movements in the Balkans, whereby the Sublime Porte’s efforts to implement military reforms in favor of strengthening the central authority and in the fight against local despotism will be used to secede from the Ottoman Empire.⁹¹⁷ As a result, there will be a direct intervention by the great European powers in the affairs of the Sublime Porte, as a necessity that its simultaneous oversight, which was known to lead to the collapse, would be done in accordance with the preservation of balances between them.

Despite these developments and the reactions that followed, it was clear that the Janissaries and their old structures were not ready to accept military, social and political reforms. Thus, from 1801-1808 a series of rebellions by the Janissaries occurred with serious consequences for the very internal social and political developments of the Empire settling of accounts between the Janissaries and the new military Order. Wanting to end the civil war, and in favor of the New Military Order, Sultan Selim, in early 1805, decided to organize a new corps in Edirne formed on the basis of general recruitment in the Balkans. Ruchuk’s *ayan*, Tirsinikli Oglu, was put in charge of the resistance: he joined all the great feudal lords. The Porte sent an army commanded by Kadi Pasha, the leader of the *Nizam-i-Cedit*, the Janissaries of Edirne revolted, and panic gripped Istanbul, and Selim had to capitulate: the Grand Vizier and the Reformers were dismissed. A little later, another revolt of the Janissaries took place in the capital. The sultan tried to save the throne by bringing down *Nizam-i-Cedit* and handing over its leaders to the insurgents. He was forced to lock himself in his saray, giving a chance to his cousin, Conservative Mustafa IV, to the throne in May 1807.⁹¹⁸

Coming to the throne of Sultan Mustafa IV, the defeat of the New Military Order which was abandoned, and the return of the Janissaries, however, did not comfort the empire, as they were no longer ready for war or peace and as such had turned into a major problem. Their aim was to keep the structures that could not be maintained, which in these efforts brought concern and turmoil, threatening to overthrow the empire from within, especially after the rebellions of certain pashas (that of Egypt and Janina), where the great powers began to mingle their fingers. This caused the “remnants” of the *Nizam-i-Cedit* from Ruchuk to appear on the scene again, in which case Mustafa Bayraktar, after taking the place of the murdered Tirsinikli Oglu, gathered a “volunteers” army of 30,000 people demanding Selim’s return to the throne. They entered the

⁹¹⁶ Idem.

⁹¹⁷ Idem.

⁹¹⁸ Idem, p. 248.

capital in July 1808. The next day they placed on the throne one of Selim's grandsons who survived assassination - Mahmud II (1808-1839).

REBELLING ALBANIAN PASHAS – THE BUSHATLI AND ALI PASHA TEPELENA

Sultan Mahmud's accession to the throne necessitated the continuation of military reforms in accordance with the model of the *Nizam-i-Cedit*, which though suffering defeat by the janissaries and conservatives, still remained the only acting force. Bayraktarss *ayans*, who emerged as a progressive military force, however, could not be the solution to the problem, as they had to submit to a central and joint command in accordance with the new military models. Pursuant to this situation, the Sultan persuaded Bayraktar that the *ayans* of Rumelia should appear as the nucleus of a new corps, called *seymens*, in the arms of traditional troops. With this, the *Nizam-i-Cedit* was restored, though with a different name.⁹¹⁹

This decision was also opposed by the Janissaries. They also went to war against the *Seymens*, again relying on the conservative *ulema* who were inspired by Sultan Mustafa's mother Valide. That same year, the Janissaries once again revolted and became masters of the capital. The Grand Vizier committed suicide, while Mahmud II did nothing to save his great vizier, but looking by how far the resistance against the reforms went. Against those circumstances, Sultan Mahmud II, who had no choice but to continue the reforms initiated by Selim, allowed the old military structures to operate, but by causing divisions among them through various privileges, while paying particular attention to the *seymens*, who appeared as part of the New Military Order.

The reformist sultan, in order to quell the announced revolt of the Janissaries, lured some of them to the new Order, promising them high ranks in the new military hierarchy, while depriving the order of the spiritual nourishment they had from the time of its founding – supervision by the Bektashi. In addition, by allowing them creation of families, ie marriages and property, the Janissaries were also deprived of the factor of fanaticism of their military craft with which they had become elite imperial guards enjoying the greatest merits for the successes of its military in the 15th-17th centuries. The economic and political privileges granted to some of them will also play a significant role in this crushing of the Janissaries, in which case the military ideal was replaced by that of wealth and social position, with which their cult began to decline significantly along with the honors they enjoyed.

The example of privileges within the imperial table will have a devastating effect on the Janissaries in the suburbs, precisely where they had great authority and were mostly exploited by local structures, as many of them will replace the opposition to central government by finding a common language with these structures. They were also viewed as threatened by imperial reforms, which had already begun to tarnish the Sultan's authority in favor of strengthening their feudal lords, even excluding him altogether, as would be the case with Kara Mahmut Pasha of Shkodra, Osman Pasha Pazvanoglu of Vidin and Ali Pasha of Janina.⁹²⁰

In this development, that is, the joint dance of the Janissaries in the ambitions of the despotic pashas to oppose the power of the Sultan towards the creation of independent pashas, Sultan Selim III and later his successor Sultan Mahmud II were forced to fight against the Janissaries by connecting it with the dismissal of the rebelling Pashaliks, primarily the Pashalik

⁹¹⁹ Idem, p. 249.

⁹²⁰ Birge, John Kingsley: "Urdhri Bektashi i dervishëve" ("The Bektashi order of dervishes"), Tiranë, 2008; Schwartz, Stephen: "Islami tjetër" ("Another Islam"), Prishtinë, 2009.

of Shkodra led by the Bushatlis and that of Vidin by Pazvanoglu to finally pass to Ali Pasha Tepelena of Janina.

For the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian pashas represented special concern, as they were associated with a strategic space both for it, to protect themselves from opponents, but also for the opponents of the Porte, who through them weakened or even destabilized it, as they will do from time to time and in accordance with their interests on the part of Austria-Hungary, Russia, France as well as England from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the rise and fall, ie the strengthening and demolition of these Pashaliks (Shkodra, Vidin and Janina), represent the long overture of the internal confrontation of the Ottoman Empire with the feudal-despotic structures, on which over time it was supported, but one day accounts had to be settled with them as by their empowerment and independence, they threatened the central authority. But, since the internal power was a matter of mentalities based on the logic of the strongest, which was frequently useful for removing the suffocations created by local authorities, the Ottoman Empire had an interest in the Albanian pashas for strategic reasons, as in certain cases these structures were preserved and even strengthened. It is known that the Empire will refuse to defend some of the Sanjakbeys appointed by it, as was the case with Ohër, Durres and Berat, when they will be attacked by Mehmed Pasha, and later Mahmut Pasha Bushatli of Shkodra, or the local feudal lords in Rumelia since Pazvanoglu will forcibly bring them under surveillance. In some cases, Ali Pasha Tepelena would have been instigated in various ways by the Porte itself instigating some of the sanjaks to join the Pashalik of Janina. Confrontations with the Porte will arise when the Pashas begin to reduce the center's taxes, reduce them unilaterally, or stop them altogether, as will be the case with Pazvanoglu, and he will be declared independent from the Empire, and as Mahmut Pasha Bushatli will do for a while, as he will enter into some unsuccessful relations first with the Russians and later with the Austro-Hungarians, stating that he needed them for sustaining the Pashalik army.⁹²¹

Sultan Selim III and later his successors Mustafa IV and Mahmud II – with the latter becoming a decisive factor in settling accounts with the Janissaries and their order in 1826, in addition to dispersal, will launch the fight against the Bektashi order, which had been appointed as their spiritual protectors.⁹²² The trigger for open military intervention against the insurgent Pashas, the Sultan will use exactly the support they gave to the Janissaries and their use to fight the Empire's efforts to carry out reforms in the army as well as its modernity, which were decisive for its further fate. Thus, the insurgent Pasha of Vidin (Pazvanoglu) would first serve in the imperial army during the Austro-Turkish war of 1789-92 and then return to Vidin, convinced that he would restore family wealth, and the Pashalik, which would be influential in an important knot connecting the part of the Ottoman Empire with the West. Claiming that he had to gather around himself certain military forces outside the imperial oversight, within a year he would raise an army of robbers with janissaries and dissatisfied persons from among the ranks of the imperial troops, who had begun to show clear signs of anarchy. When the governor of Vidin, loyal to Sultan Selim, sent troops to put an end to his atrocities, he defeated them without much

⁹²¹ See: "The Life of Ali Pascha of Janina, late vizir of Epirus", London 1823; Boppe, A. "Napoleoni dhe Ali Pasha", Tiranë 1999; Skendi, Stavro: "Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar", Tiranë, 2000; "Historia e popullit shqiptar", I, Tiranë, 2002.

⁹²² The Bektashis first appeared in the form of a dervish order in the Asian part of the Ottoman Empire (Anatolia). The founder and protector of this mystical order was Haji Bektash, born in Iran in 1224 and settled in Turkey in 1284. A special role in conceiving Haji Bektashi's ideas had his contacts with the Asian faiths of Buddhism and Hinduism during his travels to India, Tibet, and China. The Bektashis found a place in the Balkans and especially in the Albanian space, where they were accepted and spread in almost all parts of the country. It is estimated that their teachings enticed a good part of Albanians to accept Islam outside dogma. At the time of the national awakening, they even turned into militants of Albanian nationalism. For more on the Bektashi among the Albanians see: Schwartz, Stephen: "Islami tjetër – Sufizmi dhe rrëfimi për respektin", ("The Other Islam - Sufism and the Confession of Respect"), Prishtinë, 2009; Schwartz, Stephen: "Bektashizmi si model Universal" ("Bektashism as a Universal Model"), Tiranë, 2003; Schwartz, Stephen: "Two Books on Bektashi Islam in Albania", published in "Albanian Catholic Bulletin", Tiranë, 1991; Rexhepagiqi, Jashar: "Dervishët dhe teqetë në Kosovë, në Sanxhak dhe rajonet tjera përreth" ("Dervishes and tekkes in Kosovo, Sandzak and other surrounding regions"), Pejë, 2003.

effort.⁹²³ With further strengthening with various troops from the detachments of the Janissaries from different parts of the Empire, and especially with the ruthless *kerjali* for oppression, the Pasha of Vidin, in 1795, declared independence from the Sultan.⁹²⁴

This was the first case of declaration of secession of a pasha from European parts from the Sublime Porte. It will be followed by similar actions or of the same nature, as was the case of Kara Mahmut Pasha Bushati from Shkodra in 1796 and Ali Pasha Tepelena of Janina in 1822.

Sultan Selim III would not expect this action, as he was convinced that this would serve as a good reason to settle accounts with the disobedient pashas and the janissaries, especially with the latter, whom he already saw as the main opponents of the reforms. But the moment his army was getting ready to go to Vidin, things would take an almost different turn, as it was Napoleon Bonaparte with an attack on Egypt that briefly blocked his way.⁹²⁵

The response to Napoleon was of great importance, as such acts already highlighted the role of the internal factor, that is, of autonomous movements, which could inspire the disintegration of the Empire from within, as well as their use from outside, notwithstanding the formal declarations of the great powers regarding the observance of its territorial integrity as well as the status quo, in accordance with the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference of 1865, a condition that will be accepted by the Berlin Congress and will continue until its collapse.⁹²⁶

That the great powers of the time had already begun to play their game of bringing down the Empire from within, despite the declaration of support, would be best seen in the case of Pasha of Vidin, who would not have made his move without being led by opponents of the Ottoman Empire (Russia and Austria-Hungary), who until so far had been at war with it and despite the signing of peace agreements, still sought internal forces to weaken the Empire. In line with this trend, the Vidin Pasha even sought to establish ties with Russia and other Orthodox countries in order to strengthen his position. A similar request was made to Vienna, but as will be seen, once the Empire extinguishes the Serbian uprising, it will return with great severity and crush it.⁹²⁷

Almost at the same time and with the same methods, the Bushatlis of Shkodra will act, aligned to the rejection of the imperial reforms that threatened the feudal lords, and linked to the entry into play with external factors, although, evidently, will always end up with nothing because the great powers (Austria-Hungary and Russia) were looking for “troublemakers” in Arnavutluk, but by no means, for them to be beneficiaries. Thus, first it will be Mehmet Pasha and later his son, Mahmut Pasha, who will rise fast to the throne by absorbing great power around them, which the Pashalik of Shkodra, unlike that of Vidin, which was close to Istanbul and geographically did not have the same importance as the Albanian pasha, will turn it into a center of attention for the outside world, especially knowing the claims of Austria-Hungary to Bosnia, those of France to the Adriatic coast and Russia to the Orthodox factor (Montenegrin and Serbian) ready to take advantage for hegemonic purposes, which were put into action shortly after. First will be the war of the Ottoman Empire against Russia and Austria-Hungary of 1789-92 and then that with Napoleon and the case of Montenegro, as a new card that was being introduced into the poker game of the Great Powers, so that the Pashalik of Shkodra will increase its importance to the Empire, as well as to others who were in conflict with it, or who claimed to derive benefits from indirect games. In these circumstances, Mahmut Pasha, who turned into a

⁹²³ See Glen, Misha “*Historia e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, p. 5.

⁹²⁴ The *Kerjali* called also *Gerjali* - were nomadic robbers, who were put in the service of the one who gave them the most. These robbers were in high demand in Serbia, Bosnia, as well as in Hungary, as they were often used to weaken the authority of the central government. Such troops were used by the Serbs during the Second Uprising, but they were also seen in Greece during the 1922-1930 war.

⁹²⁵ Glenny, Misha: “*Historia e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 5; Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë 2000, pp. 29-30; Boue, Ami: “*Shqipëria në Turqinë Europiane*”, Tiranë, pp. 103-108.

⁹²⁶ See more about the status quo in the European part of the Ottoman Empire at Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, Protocols and Decisions, pp. 95-262.

⁹²⁷ For more see Castellán, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë, 1991, pp. 257-263.

powerful pasha, will think that he can succeed by gaining direct agreements with the opponents of the Porte, first with Russia and then with Austria-Hungary and France, some games that, the last one with the French, will cost them their heads. Thus, in May 1788 Mahmut Pasha met at the castle of Rozafa with a representative of the Russian ambassador to Venice. At the meeting, Bushatli agreed to continue the uprising against the “common enemy” and pledged to facilitate the entry of Russian troops into Istanbul, invading Albania as far as Manastir and part of Macedonia as far as Thessaloniki.⁹²⁸

For this participation in the war, he asked for a lot of money to be given to the Albanian pashas and for a squadron of warships to the coast to threaten or, if necessary, to bomb those cities that will held the side of the Porte.⁹²⁹

Realizing that the Russians had their own accounts and they could keep him in check, Bushatli ventured he would do the same with Vienna, as it could add to the bargain in his deal with those at war with the Ottoman Empire. It is even said that, at the request of the Pasha of Shkodra to Vienna, through the Archbishop of Tivar, Gjergj Radovani, the court of the monarchy had sent to Shkodra its representative, who would deal with the possibility of Mahmut Pasha taking their side in the war against the Porte in the form of an alliance with neighboring forces.⁹³⁰

However, neither Vienna nor Russia will need the help of the Pasha of Shkodra, because in January 1792, to counter the new danger coming from France and Bonaparte, they signed a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire. Conciliatory notes for Mahmut Pasha will also come from Sultan Selim III, who knew that the powerful Pasha of Shkodra would always be needed as an important point at one end of the European part of the Empire to oversee developments in Bosnia and Montenegro. Therefore, he decided to appoint him vizier, while his brother, Ibrahim, was promoted to Pasha and was allowed to rule the Sanjak of Ohër and Elbasan.

It seems that the Pasha of Shkodra misjudged the gifts coming from Istanbul. After Sultan Selim III, through *Nizam-i-Cedit*, announced plans to reform the imperial army, pushed by the *ulema*, the feudal lords and the landowners, and convinced that by relying on the strength of the Janissaries, most threatened by the Sultan’s military reform, Mahmut Pasha issued the first signs of a second uprising against Sultan Selim III and his reforms.⁹³¹

Of course, this time too, in addition to the internal forces that were against any change in the rusty imperial structure, Mahmut Pasha turned his eyes to the opponents of the Porte. Russia and Austria-Hungary, with which he had set up accounts in favor of further strengthening, were now replaced by France and its policy of expansion into the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. It will be the ambassador of General Bonaparte in Venice, who after the subjugation of Northern Italy in May 1796 planned to conquer Dalmatia, encouraged the Pasha of Shkodra to enter war against Montenegro and put it under the umbrella of the Pashalik of Shkodra. He even provided financial and military assistance (with specialists, who were supposed to help modernize his military forces for this expedition), without thinking that by doing so he was opening himself up to trouble with Russia, as the protector of the Slav-Orthodox countries, but also with Austria-Hungary, which would never allow a French ally near Bosnia.⁹³²

The French encouragement of Montenegro will be crucial for Mahmut Pasha to set out on a campaign against Cetina. In July 1796, he entered the Albanian highlands to subdue them and move on. But, as will be seen, he will not succeed, as he encountered a strong resistance there, which he did not expect. In September, he will repeat the attack, in which case he was killed by the Montenegrins in an ambush set up for him, ending his dream of an independent Pashalik independent of the Ottoman Empire, which was not projected as an internal development and in

⁹²⁸ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, *First Part*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 627; Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 29.

⁹²⁹ See “*Historia e Popullit shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 627.

⁹³⁰ *Idem*, p. 627.

⁹³¹ *Idem*, p. 628.

⁹³² *Idem*, p. 629.

line with the reforms, but in the opposite direction: relying on the old feudal structures and those of religious obscurantism, which were contrary to the time. Efforts to rely on outside support, seeking to play the game of those who had an interest in weakening the Ottoman Empire from within, will also prove futile, for the simple reason that none of the Great Powers flirting with were, in those circumstances, ready to accept the animation of the Albanian factor, especially when it appeared with the power of an ethnic subject in a space where each had its own accounts.

More or less, the same fate will befall the Pashalik of Janina and Ali Pasha Tepelena, who began his rise the moments that the Pasha of Shkodra will be extinguished and in whose extinction one could also see his own hand. The “*Lion of Janina*” not only failed to learn from the “*Wolf of Shkodra*”, but followed the same way, repeating the same methods to expand power (usually relying on janissaries and other military forces in disarray and destroying internal power of the feudal lords and local pariahs) and, tried to enter the same games with external powers so that in the end, when all the cards were spent and being unable to stand up to them, especially when confronted with the mighty imperial response, being left alone facing it, leaving behind a glory as a consolation against an end with severe consequences for himself and benefits for others, especially for the Greeks. Thus, the Pasha of Janina too, began to gather power by destroying small and medium-sized feudal lords, which, through various taxes and barriers for profit, had begun to suffocate the trade and circulation of goods on a larger scale. Those actions of Ali Pasha Tepelena will not be opposed by the Porte even when they were carried out through extremely violent methods, in which often viceroys appointed by the Sultan fell prey.

After the troubles with the Shkodra Pashalik, the Ottoman Empire estimated that the strengthening of the Pashalik of Janina would be useful in maintaining the balance of power from the north and south, at a very sensitive point from which developments could be monitored in Montenegro and especially in Bosnia, as well as those in the south, where it was rather clear that the Greeks would follow the example of the Serbs, who after two uprisings (that of 1804 and 1815) had gained autonomy. As will be done initially with Mahmut Pasha Bushati, when he will be granted the rank of vizier to be associated with himself when he had started playing tail with the Russians and Austro-Hungarians, the Sublime Porte gave Pasha of Janina the rank of a vizier in 1799 after he took part in the war against the French forces, whereby Butrint, Preveza and Vonica will be taken back from them.⁹³³

The Pasha of Janina, however, appeared dissatisfied with this promotion, and even saw it as a Sultan’s backstage, as the coastal cities which he had taken from the French by war, he was compelled to return under the direct supervision of the Sublime Porte while it, for more, was entering into some games with the Russians, such as the Russian-Ottoman agreement of 1800, establishing the so-called Republic of the Seven Islands, which would sanction Russia’s deployment on the Ionian Islands. As international circumstances as well as the developments in the first decade of the nineteenth century were permeated by the behavior of the French for greater penetration into the East and South as well as by the numerous and frequent alliances to stop Napoleon Bonaparte’s passage, Ali Pasha would estimate that his involvement in these games could provide him with multifaceted benefits. Like Mahmut Pasha Bushati once, Ali Pasha began to seek alliances in various ways, but these had to be of much greater proportions and of a longer coherence, which, though in all respects, would fail, at certain moments turned it into an important factor, mostly for temporary use and games for the benefit of others.

From this point of view, his connections with England were of great importance, conditioned by his departure from France and the support given to the war against Bonaparte and later against Russia. Although they will not bring any political benefit, they will still be valuable, because thanks to the friendship with some of the well-known creators and personalities of the time, that the Pasha of Janina had in both the English and European public with talk about

⁹³³ For more see: “*The Life of Ali Pascha of Jannina, late Vizier of Epirus*”, London, 1823; Boppe, August: “*Napueloni dhe Ali Pasha*”, Tiranë, 1999; Bue, Amin: “*Shqipëria*”, Tiranë; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002, p. 643.

Albanians and Albania as an exotic “pearl” in the Balkans with old European roots and the like. The great poet, George Byron, who will spend a good time in Janina and from there even, in pursuit of anti-Ottoman uprisings of Albanians and Greeks, will pass away in Missolonghi in 1824 from tuberculosis, was among the first to reflect in romantic tones the Albanian world as well as what he felt for the Pasha of Janina and his power.⁹³⁴

Introduced into this vortex, Ali Pasha learned the tricks, flatteries, but also the power of instant action, which he will mostly use to raise internal power and despotism to tyranny, but not to achieve any historical goal. His connections and meetings with the outside world, Pasha of Janina will use in order to expand and strengthen his internal power, which mostly through intrigues, traps and tyranny against rivals (Pashas of Berat, Delvina, Elbasan, and so on reaching as far as Shkodra). Suli and the Suliotes will pay a high price for this behavior, along with Himara and the Himariots, whose ethnic identity will be ruined as a compact Albanian population that had maintained internal self-rule for more than three centuries. This would even lead to the fact that even when the final expedition of the Sublime Porte against him began in 1822, he would remain almost alone, betrayed even by his sons, who would surrender to the Sultan and be put into his service.

However, the rise and fall of the Pashalik of Janina, in what would be a precondition for the implementation of the Tanzimat Reforms (the destruction of the Janissary order and the bringing down of the Pashaliks threatening the central authority of the Porte in favor of preserving the old decaying feudal structures), there was something special, as it highlighted the power of the Albanian factor in the Ottoman Empire in their ethnic dimensions, which over the four centuries had preserved its integrity and even significantly increased it. So what the Porte had treated so far as a certain ethnic Albanian geography, which in order to be placed on the weighing scale of a considerable importance (autonomy) needed clear political concepts, had now encouraged the emergence of the Greek “*Megali-idea*” and Garašanin’s “*Načertanije*”. The first paved the way for well-known Greek expansionism, while the second paved the way for Serbia’s autonomy and the creation of a Serbian national program, on which the great Serbian hegemonic concept will be built focusing mostly on ethnic Albanian space and its clear invading goals. Thus, the Albanian National Awakening, as a need for joint action and political programs, which will later emerge from it, are closely related to the events preceding the Tanzimat Reforms (it is about the proclamation of “*Nizam-i-Cedit*” in 1794 by Sultan Selim III and the consequences they will produce, especially the fight against the order of the Janissaries and the settling of accounts with the rebellious pashas of Shkodra, Vidin and Janina). This process was inevitably influenced by developments leading to the first and second Serbian uprisings, Serbia’s autonomy, and the independence of Greece in 1830.⁹³⁵

AUTONOMY OF SERBIA, INDEPENDENCE OF GREECE AND EMERGING ALBANIAN ISSUE

It has often been said that there must have been a so-called “Great Serbian Migration” from Kosovo in the 1690s, which must have affected this population “taken under the protection of Emperor Leopold I” to form a “Hungarian Serbia” in the area between Sava and Drava and between Danube and Tisa, although its heart, with its metropolitan seat in Karlovac, Srem, and its trade and intellectual center at Neusatz-Novi Sad had long before been there. It is also said that the Emperor had guaranteed to his young subjects the freedom of religion and a

⁹³⁴ See Byron, Georg Gordon (Lord Byron): “*Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*”, London, 1812.

⁹³⁵ Conrad Malte-Brun: “*Për Shqipërinë dhe Shqiptarët*”, Tiranë, pp. 171-226; Boppe, August: “*Napoleoni dhe Ali Pasha*”, Tiranë.

self-rule over their church, which was very similar to the *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire.⁹³⁶

That beyond the Sava-Danube rivers all over Hungarian Vojvodina there was a “Hungarian Serbia”, which in the 18th century will appear as a nucleus of a small Serbian bourgeoisie, which in 1790 founded a Serbian high school in Karlovci followed by another in Neusatz (Novi Sad), this intellectual development accompanied simultaneously with the publication of a newspaper in the Serbian language in Vienna, this is rather true. To this truth another may be added, which has to do with the role of the Orthodox Church as a spiritual protector but also as a political and social guide, around which the Serbs had always tightened their ranks to face all the efforts of the Catholic-Hungarian hierarchy to draw back to uniatism.

These and similar data about the emergence of Serbian ethnicity in Hungary and their spiritual and cultural institutions (church) up to local self-rule and autonomy (in this case one should not forget the layer of Slavs from the Middle Ages onwards, which was included on the “military border” in Krajina - Croatia with a two-century-old tradition), not only fail to confirm the claim that it was the so-called “great Serbian migration” from Kosova, which created “Hungarian Serbia” in Vojvodina, which was then “filled with Arnauts from northern Albania”,⁹³⁷ but on the contrary denying it for the very fact that even that small population that left with Bishop Arsenije Crnojević come mostly from the ranks of Orthodox and Catholic Albanians, while the Serbian ethnicity, along with the Croatian one, in that part, was from the Middle Ages, together with its autonomous “zhupanies” structures, tolerated by the Byzantine government in order to provide protection from the barbaric attacks coming from the North in the western parts of Illyricum.⁹³⁸

With few exceptions, the core of Slavic ethnic structures (Croats and Serbs) in these areas, including Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the part of Vojvodina around the Danube and Sava rivers, continued to be so during the Ottoman conquests. Moreover, the Despotate of the Brankovići (although from many sources related to the Triballi origin), not coincidentally had its “castle” in Smederevo. There it will maintain its presence for a long time, from where it will continue to send spiritual “messages” to the Ottoman part, while the Belgrade Pashalik had a Serb minority, of mainly rural population, which as such will remain until the first Serbian uprising of 1804.⁹³⁹

As a scattered minority, the Serb population appears in the early nineteenth century in some urban centers (Valjevo, Uzice) while the population composition of Sumadija itself at that time appears “very rarely populated”, which will be filled after the Eastern Crisis with Serbs from Bosnia and Vojvodina”.⁹⁴⁰

This population, a minority, mainly peasants, in the part of Belgrade’s Pashalik, will continue to be spiritually nourished by Western ideas, for as much as possible, by “Hungarian

⁹³⁶ See Castellan, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë 1991, p. 255.

⁹³⁷ See: J. Cvijić: “*Osnove za geografiju i geologiju Makedonije i Stare Srbije*”, 1906; Василевич, Ј. Х: “*Јужна Стара Србија*”, I, p. 483; Djordjević Vladan: “*Die Albanensen und die Grossmächte*”, Leipzig, 1913.

⁹³⁸ About the settlement of the Slavs in the northern part of Illyricum (Vojvodina) and their autonomous structures (counties) during the Middle Ages see: Constantinus Porphyrogenitus: “*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*”, Bonnae MDCCXI, pp. 141-148; Jiriček, Konstantin: “*Historia e Serbëve*”, Tiranë, 2002; “*Vizantijski izvori za istoriju naroda Jugoslavije*”, Tom I-IV, Posebna izdanja Vizantološkog Instituta, 3,7,10, 12, Beograd, 1955-1971; Ćirković, S: “*Srbi u srednjem veku*”, Beograd 1995; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, Beograd, 1994; Novaković, Relja: “*Gde se nalazi Srbija od VII do XII veka*”, Beograd, 1906.

⁹³⁹ More on the population of Belgrade Pashalik see: Vukanović, Tatomir: “*Naselja u Srbiji u doba prvog srpskog ustanka 1804-1815*”, Vranje, 1975.

⁹⁴⁰ On filling the population of the Serbian Principality declared in 1830 and doubling it with a population “absorbed” from Bosnia and Croatia see: Jagodić, Miloš: “*Naseljevanje Kneževine Srbije 1861-1880*”, Beograd, 2004. Jagodić provides data that Serbia just after being declared a principality had about 270 thousand inhabitants. Within three years, the population will double to 570 thousand inhabitants. Threats of population growth will continue, despite the fact that after the Russo-Ottoman wars of 1878 and the Serb-Ottoman wars of 1877/78, from the province of Nis to Prokuplje and Kurshumlija will be expelled over 100 thousand Muslim inhabitants, mostly Albanians! (“*Naseljevanje Kneževine Srbije 1861-1880*”, pp. 44, 47, 95, 116 and 162).

Serbia”, while the local Orthodox Church, in response to the “Catholic-Hungarian trap” of retreating to Uniatism, had continued its efforts to strengthen their ties with Orthodoxy towards Russia, hoping to find protection and inclusion in its social and political orbit, as would actually happen.

Efforts to establish ties with Russia will be joined little by little by some circles of Hungarian Serbs who were already beginning to engage in Russian propaganda, which, since the Karlovac Peace, had gained the right to spiritual care for the Orthodox population of the European part of the Ottoman Empire (Balkans) saw its future influence in the Pashalik of Belgrade and Sumadija. Clerics from the monasteries of Fruska Gora went on pilgrimages to Zagorac or Pecerskaja Laura bringing back from the place of the Tsar the image of the promised Land. This wave was joined by people of the faith who were studying in Russia. Such was the future historian Jovan Rajić (1726-1801), known for his pro-Russian spirit, who turned to popular hope when Vienna joined Russia in its new war against the Ottoman Empire (1788), from which the idea of a “*Medieval Serbia*” was born.⁹⁴¹

The issue of “Medieval Serbia” came to light after breaking away from the comprehensive idea of Illyricum, where the lack of an orientation on where that Serbia should be placed (sometimes in Bosnia, sometimes in Posavina, and sometimes in Sumadija always with an imagination of a Pashalik such as Belgrade near Hungary), which nevertheless lacked a compact Serbian ethnicity, especially in the Belgrade Pashalik, where they were a minority, to be compensated with the “religious concept”. Based on the principle that the homeland is religion, Pavlo Jelinac in 1765 published a “*Brief introduction to the historical development of the Slovenian-Serbian people*”.⁹⁴²

Jelinac’s secular idea of “Illyricum” as a Serbian homeland in accordance with religion will in principle be accepted by Dositej Obradović.⁹⁴³ Obrenović saw the future of Serbia in neither Gračanica nor Peja, as some Russophile ecclesiastical circles had begun to trumpet, but ascended to Vojvodina, in the northern part, around the Danube and the Sava, from where it would maintain its natural connections with the “spiritual matrix” in Vojvodina and Banat, stretching from Segedin, Arad, and Timisoara to Vrsac. Therefore, it is only natural that the uprising of 1804, which started as a revolt against the oppression of the Janissaries and *Dahiya* concentrated in Belgrade’s Pashalik, is a natural one, and all that unraveling that lead to its failure and its re-ignition in 1815, was neither conjured up nor connected in any way with Kosova or “the medieval Serbian spiritual cradle”, as it would be described later, but it entirely preserved the concept that the future Serbia inspired and built in the Pashalik of Belgrade up to Sumadija, always associated with the intellectual and spiritual core centered in Hungary (Vojvodina, Srem and Banat)...

This Serbia, along with Hungary, was what its genuine Austro-Hungarian inspirer wished, investing so much in the idea in the cultural, social and, finally, political plain. And this kind of Serbia is what Russia also wanted, though the idea of a future Serbian state in Vienna was projected to be a vassal of its own, a Western-linked Balkan Piedmontese vassal, while Russia demanded a vassal by which it would be able to extend its influence to Southeast Europe,

⁹⁴¹ Idem.

⁹⁴² About the work of P. Jelinac and his concept about “spiritual Serbia”, where he returns to the medieval monasteries in Kosovo, see Haumant, E: “*La Formation de la Yugoslavie*”, Paris, 1930, pp. 165-166.

⁹⁴³ Dositej Obradovic (1744-1811) was born in Cakovo, in Banat, in a family of craftsmen. He became a monk in the monastery of Hopovo, from where he left in 1740 to Zagreb and then to Mount Athos, where he was disappointed and left for Halle and Leipzig. From 1789 to 1802 he stayed in Vienna from where he propagated to the Serbs to join the Karadjordje uprising. He joined it in 1806, as the teacher of Karadjordje’s children, on which occasion he will be given the title of the first minister of education. He died in Belgrade in 1811. His main work “*Život i priklučenja*” highlights the idea that the Balkan Slavs should be united in a single family (state) in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Slovenia. He saw the united Slavic state in the north and west (south of the Danube and the Sava up to Krusevac) and by no means in Kosova and Macedonia, as will be announced later in Belgrade’s nationalist and hegemonic projects. From the cultural point of view, he had great merits, for creating together with V. Karadzic the Serbian literary language, separating it from the old Slavic, which was used in churches.

whereby the Slavs would be associated with the idea of Orthodoxy for Russian hegemonic purposes.

The notion that Serbian society, regardless of its temporary status under the Ottoman Empire (autonomy or *knjaževina*), should be economically and politically tied to Vienna, but that its church should maintain its Orthodox affiliation, was also supported by its first leader, Aleksandar Karadjordjević.⁹⁴⁴

Karadjordje, who returned to Palanka after the Austrian-Turkish peace and received the rank of *buyukbas* in the local militia organized by Haji Mustafa, felt good at the helm of the local militia and did not even show any signs of rebellion, which circumstances will later produce. But it will be the Janissaries who, after rebelling against Sultan Selim III, returned to the Belgrade Pashalik and began their notorious atrocities, forcing Karadjordje in his capacity of *buyukbas* to and a little later “leader” (*vodza*) to fight against them and the *dahiya* alongside the Pasha of Belgrade, Haji Mustafa, whom they killed. On this occasion he had to continue the fight against the angry Janissaries, carrying it to the rural areas, where there were good opportunities for the Kachak war, which had already begun to be used by *hajduci* (units of popular volunteers who also fought against the Janissaries, but who were exceedingly undisciplined and harmful).

With the Austro-Hungarian military experience, Karadjordje managed to repel many of the Janissary units, which were also under no surveillance and brutal to the people, and finally forced them to close in on the Belgrade fortress. Thus, a war against the rebel Janissaries in defense of the Sultan’s authority turned Karadjordje into the leader of a popular uprising, in which, little by little, the Austro-Hungarians and the Russians, each for their own account, began to point their finger.

With the *Dahias* (leaders of the Janissaries, who led the Pashalik) in that war confusion, who had also set a kind of double terror (against the Sipahis and the Christian *Knezes* who fought together against oppression), Karadjordje had to fight against them as well, a war that engulfed the entire country, in which some local *knezes* (*leaders*) had already begun to enter into relations with representatives of the Porte over an agreement that first provided for the elimination of *dahias*, and then went as far as the demand for recognition of an autonomy within the Empire, an autonomy that was to include religious and commercial freedoms and appointment of a “Supreme Knez” (leader) of the Serbs.⁹⁴⁵

The Serbian demands were submitted from Zemun (Semlin) to the Ottoman representatives on May 10, 1804, and sent to the Sultan, who instead of giving them a political answer decided to play down the whole revolt of the Serbian population by punishing the *dahias*, who, in that part, not only were threatening his reforms, but at the same time were setting the ground for a general rebellion against him, which will soon happen. Realizing the danger, Selim III charged the Bosnian vizier, Beqir Pasha, to help the Serbs expel the dangerous *dahias*.⁹⁴⁶

The Bosnian Pasha’s campaign against Belgrade’s *dahias* began in July of that year, which was joined by Karadjordje with about 2,000 Serbian cavalry. The joint actions of the Ottoman units from Bosnia and Karadjordje’s volunteers broke the *dahias* without any great effort, who

⁹⁴⁴ Little is known about Djordje Petrovic, known as Karadjordje, Blak George. His biography is more like a legend, from which it can be understood that he was born in Sumadija, Visevac, near Raca, where he is said to have been baptized on a date ranging from 1762 to 1769. In 1787 his family left Sumadija and settled in Vojvodina, where he was put in the service of the Krusedol monastery. When Austria declared war on the Ottoman Empire, 20-year-old Karadjordje joined the forces of the Serbian *Freikorps* and fought in Western Serbia, where he learned martial arts and rose to the rank of non-commissioned officer. After the peace of Sistova, he returned to Topollo as a pig trader. When Hacı Mustafa organized the Serbian militia, Karadjordje became the province’s *buyuk-base* (chief of a hundred) and became familiar with Ottoman tactics. When the Janissaries returned he took to the mountains against them, which took on the dimensions of a general uprising, in which he was also elected their commander. Some Serbian historians link Karadjordjević's origins to an Albanian family from Kelmendi, who moved to Sumadija and then to Vojvodina after the defeat of the Austro-Turkish war, in which a large part of the Kelmendi tribe was forced to join the Austrian army fleeing to the north. More about Karadjordjević's Albanian origin see: Milorad Bošnjak-Slobodan Jakovljević: “*Karađorđevići – skrivena istorija*“, Gornji Milanovac, 2007).

⁹⁴⁵ See Castellan, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*“, Tiranë 1991, p. 265.

⁹⁴⁶ For more see: Petrovich, Boro Michael: “*A History of Modern Serbia: 1804-1918*“, New York, 1976, vol. I., pp. 28-29.

fled in the direction of Vidin to seek the support of Pasvanoglu, known for his rebellions against the Sultan.

The victory over the *Dahias* in cooperation with the Ottomans did not give Karadjordje the autonomy he had envisioned. Vienna, which mediated the talks, changed its mind after Napoleon's actions, which were changing the balance of power in Europe and beyond. Russia, involved in the war against Napoleon, was not interested for a new confrontation with the Porte because of the Serbs, but continued to demand the spread of an uprising of all Christians in the Balkans, which slowly spread all over Herzegovina, spreading to Epirus and Thessaly with bands of *Klephts*, a spirit that will be carried by the *phanariot hospodors* to Valahia and Moldavia.⁹⁴⁷

Seeing the blast being prepared, the Porte, after appointing Hafiz Pasha of Nish governor of Belgrade, sent him at the head of an army to settle accounts with the local insurgents. The first match between the regular Ottoman troops and the local insurgents, called the Romays, took place in August 1805 in Ivankaovo, near Cupria. The insurgents forced the Ottoman army to withdraw. This encouraged Karadjordje heading to Belgrade and capturing it in November 1806 convinced that this set a precondition for declaring an autonomous vilayet. But the fate of the autonomous vilayet depended on the development of the war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, which erupted in the autumn of that year, whereby Karadjordje, hoping for Russia's victory, violated an agreement reached days earlier with representatives of Sultan Selim about local autonomy, refusing to pay tribute and send troops against the Russians on the grounds that "Serbia considered itself an independent state".⁹⁴⁸

In these circumstances, a Russian mission appears in the Belgrade Pashalik, led by Colonel F.O. Pauluci, with whom a convention was signed, according to which Serbia became a Russian protectorate in all directions. St. Petersburg also sent a permanent representative to Belgrade, Konstantin Rodofikin, who appeared as the supervisor of the protectorate, inciting intrigue which limited Karadjordje's space.

For Karadjordje and the autonomous vilayet project, Russia's peace with Napoleon in Tilsit on July 7 and Russia's ceasefire with the Porte at Slobozias on August 24, marked a setback, as none of these agreements referred to the "autonomous state", so internationally they continued to be dependent on the Sultan.⁹⁴⁹

This made Karadjordje feel betrayed by the Russians. To strengthen himself, he first declared himself a "Supreme Leader of generation after generation", while in the games between Vienna and St. Petersburg, he turned to the Vienna card, whereby in a meeting with Marshal von Simbschen, commander of the border, he stated Serbia's desire to become a protectorate of the Habsburgs, dependent on Vienna and not on the Kingdom of Hungary, while Belgrade would turn into a fortified Austrian center.⁹⁵⁰

Claims to turn to Vienna and another similar initiative in 1808 to Napoleon cost Serbia, as Russia, after succeeding on several fronts and its army in the summer of 1810 crossing the Danube, some of its garrisons settled in Belgrade. After the break-up with Napoleon and the war with him, Alexios I turned to talks with the Ottomans, which, in 1812, ended with the Treaty of Bucharest, which provided for Serbian autonomy and the return of Ottoman garrisons to Serbia in 1804. This agreement was followed by the departure of Russian garrisons from Serbia, which were to give way to the Ottomans. At a meeting in Kragujevac in January 1813, Serbs rejected the decisions of the Bucharest Treaty, which served as a pretext for the Sultan to launch a military campaign against them, led by Kurshid Pasha. The Serbs sought help from Russia and Austria, but Russia, engaged in war with Napoleon, promised only refugee accommodation and nothing more, while Vienna promised that it could take on the role of mediator in talks with Kurshid Pasha. Left alone, the Serbs capitulated before the Ottoman army, which on October 3,

⁹⁴⁷ See Castellán, Georges: "Histori e Ballkanit", Tiranë 1991, p. 256.

⁹⁴⁸ Idem, p. 267.

⁹⁴⁹ Idem.

⁹⁵⁰ Idem, p. 268.

1813, entered a deserted Belgrade, while Karadjordje and his comrades fled across the Sava to Hungary.⁹⁵¹

Karadjordje's defeat, the amnesty announced by which all the leaders of the uprising, such as Miloš Obrenović, appointed *Knez* (leader) of Rudnik province in Sumadija, benefited, and the return of the Belgrade Pasha along with the Sipahis, did not restore peace to the country as expected. There were two factors prevented this: the fugitives in Hungary, who began to be used for the interests of the Austro-Hungarians to spread insurgency in the restored Pashalik of Belgrade, which suited the Empire, and again it was Russia, which, after defeating Napoleon in August 1814, returned to its plans for expansion into the Balkans by the means of the South Slavs and Orthodox believers, for what now as "spiritual defenders" enjoyed also the backing of the Great Powers.

On this occasion too, the main reference of the uprisings remained the *knezes* (local leaders), who could act without any great effort in the circumstances when they were already the lords of the local government. It was Haji Prodani of Čačak who raised his province in revolt, turning into the cause of another Serbo-Ottoman conflict, leading to the autonomy of Serbia, which would be achieved in 1830, at which point the cunning Milos Obrenović will be recognized as the Crown Prince of autonomous Serbia.⁹⁵²

Securing the statute of Prince-Heir was, for Obrenović, more of a diplomatic war, which he had been waging since 1917, when he treacherously beheaded Karadjordje, who had been sent to Serbia as an agent of the *Filiki Hetarias* (Society of Friends), a Greek revolutionary organization from Odessa fighting for the destabilization of the European part of the Ottoman Empire in preparation for an armed uprising and handed it over to the Sultan, successfully carried it out facing the many challenges of the wars that the Ottoman Empire and Russia were going through, like the Great Powers (Napoleon, the English for new dominions). Obrenović acted prudently all the time, convinced that it was diplomatic behavior that provided him more than wars for foreign purposes, which in those circumstances seemed inevitable. He managed to ignore many of them focusing on fulfilling its obligations only as a supplier of food (pork) to the largest armies of the time, the Austrian and Russian armies. In order to earn as much as possible by giving back as little as possible, he used many tips, such as the ones he paid since the Peace of Adrianople (September 1829), which included the decree (*khatt-i serif*) for the inheritance of the title.

Obrenović was even more cunning in spreading the uprising in Bosnia, which he ignited on all sides, while mobilizing ostensibly to help the Sultan extinguish it. When the Sultan withdrew from the circumstances of the war with Russia, Obrenović used the opportunity to expand into six other *nahiye* of Novi Pazar, Krusevac, and Vidin, the recognition of which he gained by providing the Sultan with tips. On that occasion, with the *khatt-i serif* of May 1833, the autonomous Serbia expanded its borders, thus benefiting from 24 thousand to 37 thousand square kilometers, a territory that remained unchanged until 1878.⁹⁵³

The emergence of autonomous Serbia in 1833 opened the Pandora's box in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, in line with the scenarios that had been set for it in Russia, but also in some other European centers (first in Vienna and then in London and Paris). Although the developments in it seemed a bit "simpler", due to the involvement of external factors in it, it gave rise to other similar developments due to the fact that autonomous Serbia also inspired the rest of the Serbs, spread in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the south (towards Macedonia and Kosova where there was a minority), which will conjure up hegemonic plans for the creation of a "Greater Serbia", producing what will later emerge as the Eastern Crisis and setting in motion the developments by which the Ottoman Empire would reach to the point of collapse.

⁹⁵¹ See Glenny, Misha: "Historija Balkana 1804-1999", Tiranë, 2000, p. 18; Jovanović, Slobodan: "Iz istorije i književnosti", Beograd, 1931, vol.I, pp. 53,70.

⁹⁵² Idem.

⁹⁵³ Idem.

In these dynamic developments filling the mosaic of events to set the conditions for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, however, the Independence of Greece and all those who were part of this process (Greek uprisings 1821-1825 and European intervention 1826-1833), represent one of the greatest events of Europe of Restoration, because of how it related to the great complexity of the Hellenic world, which penetrated deep into European civilization,⁹⁵⁴ though also connected with a direct intervention of the great European powers in its settlement imposed on the Ottoman Empire in the circumstances when it had militarily inflicted irreparable defeat to it.

This issue, which could inferringly be of cultural nature, however, turned into a high-intensity political issue, with the interests of the great powers at stake confronting on one hand, Russia, which under the umbrella as a “caretaker for Orthodox believers” in the Ottoman Empire that it gained at the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774, meant not only the South Slavs but also others. This formula created opportunities for the inclusion of the Greeks and Vlachs into their accounts, and on the other hand, for Great Britain and France, which began to see the crisis of the Ottoman Empire and its inevitable end in the European part as a great opportunity for Greece’s space to become a Mediterranean base for other water and land routes to the Middle East and the Far East as far as India. There was also their African policy, where Greece also played an important role.

In this interweaving of interests, of course, Russia held the strongest cards, because the Orthodox factor as well as the Eastern Church under the leadership of the Phanariotes, had special weight for the fact that it had long since turned its traditional anti-Latinism into anti-Occidentalism, affecting, although with some hesitation related to the privileged status of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵⁵ In this spirit, even national movements, uprisings and various political programs were inspired and interconnected, as was the case with the Serbs on the occasion of their uprisings and as will be the case in the following other events.

In what was considered Greece, however, there were several other factors, including that of an ethno linguistic nature that what was called the “Greek people”, formula of a common Orthodox faith, could not create national unity in accordance with the doctrine of Hellenization, “Greek is Orthodox, and Orthodox is Greek”. Neither the Vlachs, nor the Slavo-Macedonians, nor the Albanians, being the dominant ethnic factor in what geographically defined Greece in those circumstances, consented to this, an issue that, evidently, will present the cause for disagreement, confusion, and even future wars between the peoples of this area who for centuries shared the common destiny under Ottoman occupation, although, initially some of these peoples would in principle support the Greek uprising as well as Hellenism as a general framework within which they could also find answers to specific questions, that is, those of the national liberation of peoples specifically.

To the linguistic diversity (linguistic identity), which never lost its color by the power of the church with its practice of Mass in the Greek language and its well-known Hellenizing definition, was added that of the social mosaic with great differences from part to part and unbearable social and ethnic differences, such as those between the population of the mainland (Thrace, Thessaly inhabited by Vlachs and Slavo-Macedonians), the southern - (Peloponnese with autonomous government), the Islands, (with numerous Arvanites-Albanians),⁹⁵⁶ and Epirus,

⁹⁵⁴ Castellan, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë 1991, p. 276.

⁹⁵⁵ In the Ottoman Empire, from the beginning, the Orthodox Church had accepted submission to the sultan where the patriarch had his hierarchical place of the pasha with three tugs as the *baze* of Rum Milet, while the church had large assets integrated into the *waqf*. This explains the “princely counsels” of Patriarch Gregory in 1798, who told his believers that “the sultan was, after God, the sovereign of the Christians, the custodian of their wealth and life” and that “those who preach dreams of freedom” were acting contrary to the Scriptures and were driven by the Devil.” (See: Castellan, G. “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë 1991, p. 279).

⁹⁵⁶ See Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, p. 25 (“Throughout Rumelia, the Peloponnese, and the islands there were large communities of Albanians - mostly Orthodox Christians, while in the Epirote center of the rebellious pasha, Ali Pasha, Muslim Albanians predominated. Many Albanians went through a process of Hellenization, which was

an autochthonous population dominated by Muslim Albanians with their well-known tribal structures, who had maintained self-rule even during the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵⁷

This diversity highlighted the difficulties that “internal unity” would face if it relied solely on the religious factor as the Russians demanded, which would be the reason why the first proclamations calling for an uprising would reflect ethnic pluralism along with the idea that Greece could be part of an internal federation of Balkan Christian peoples.

Russia and some European centers, which had focused their interests on the “Greek people” rising to a European issue, in order to more easily get it out of the Ottoman yoke, linked the religious factor and the Christian-Orthodox affiliation to the new European ideas that emerged after the French Revolution. This could set an opportunity to remove the difficulties that could rise from complex ethnic and linguistic realities, which could impede the political formula of “a common state”. That state could not be accepted by either the Bulgarians or the Vlachs, and especially by the Albanians, whose issue was most at risk realizing that a large part of the southern population maintained the Christian faith of the Orthodox rite. Thus determining the state to the model of the Christian state, not only excluded members of the Muslim faith, numerous in this area, but at the same time put them in a confrontational position with it and even turned them into defenders of the Ottoman Empire even in circumstances where its time was passing.

This was also the reason why the idea of a general uprising, under the motto of liberation from the Ottoman yoke, came to the Greeks “from the Diaspora”, an idea that however seductively was made attractive by the French Revolution and especially the appearance of Napoleon and the his troops on the shores of the Adriatic (conquest of the Ionian Islands from 1807 to 1814), creating the conditions for their secession from foreign invasions. Thus, apostles of the French revolutionary message became two writers, Rigas Velesinlis (1757-1798) and Adamantios Korias (1748-1833). The first, Rigas Velesinlis, was born in Thessaly and raised in the Phanariot environment of the principalities where he became Secretary of the *Gospodar* (leader) of Wallachia, after some time settled in Vienna (1796) where he joined the dreams of the Hellenic circles for an uprising of the Christian peoples of the Balkans for which the monarchy was also interested at the cost of certain concessions into give it a Western orientation in order to detach it from the great Russian influence in which it was involved. With that idea he left for Greece, but in Trieste he was arrested by the Austrian police and as a citizen of the Sultan he was handed over to the Pasha of Belgrade, who ordered his execution in 1798.⁹⁵⁸

The latter, Adamantios Korais, was also a strong supporter of the Enlightenment in its French form. From the first days of his expedition to Egypt, he was put in the service of Bonaparte. Convinced that Napoleon’s work could be a lifesaver for a neo-Hellenic Greece, he aimed to restore the consciousness of a glorious ancient past. To this end he came up with *Katharevusa*, a model of modern literary language invented between ancient Greek and the vernacular.⁹⁵⁹

The Greek uprising would be inspired more directly by a pan-Hellenic Russian-influenced dream, based on a traditional peasant movement. After the defeat of Napoleon, whereas France’s influence in Greece and the Adriatic finally faded away, Alexander of Russia took over the inspiration of an uprising that would rely on the climate of Russian political-religious mysticism. On the occasion, the Russian tsar launched in the Balkans many of the agents he had mobilized in the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian refugee districts of Southern Russia. Previously, three merchants - Kanthos from the island of Patmos and two from Epirus (Skufas from Arta and Cakalov from Janina) founded in Odessa a “Society of Friends” (*Filiki Hetaria*). This secret

accelerated by participation in the War for Independence. The Kunduriotis, for example, the most powerful naval family on the island of Hydra, which led an important wing during the war, were of Albanian descent.”)

⁹⁵⁷ Glenny, Misha, cited work, Idem, p. 25.

⁹⁵⁸ Castellán, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë, 1991, p 279.

⁹⁵⁹ Idem, p. 280.

rebel association, modeled on Freemasonry, was in the service of Russian policy, aimed at provoking a general uprising in the Balkans, which would then give rise to the intervention by the Tsarist army.⁹⁶⁰ Therefore, it was no coincidence that its first chairman was a Grecophile, Alexander Ypsilantis, an officer from the Phanariot family serving in the Russian army. He planned and led the first unsuccessful uprising in the Danube Principality.

“Heteria” originally appeared in a “broader” spirit aimed at including all Greek-Orthodox Christians and not just Greeks in the ethnic sense. With this unilateral call, it gathered some prominent personalities in this activity, first in Odessa, and then in other countries as well as in Greece and Turkey, including well-known Phanariots from Istanbul, who turned into its militants. “Heteria” was able to gather around itself both Greeks, Albanians and Vlachs. With Ali Pasha of Janina, after having engaged in 1819 into an open war with the Sultan, “Heteria” reached an agreement on cooperation.⁹⁶¹

Nevertheless, Ali’s war with the Sultan and its tragic demise a year later seemed to determine the Greek uprising’s unstoppable dynamics, as the Porte, which had knowledge of “Heteria” and its aims, demanded that the answer given to Ali Pasha of Janina to be taken as a lesson, instead of allowing him to do so.⁹⁶² This caused the Grand Vizier, in March 1821, after Ypsilantis’ uprising in the Danube Principalities was quenched a few days earlier, to call a meeting of “understanding” between the bishops and the heads of the Peloponnese. Those standing aside who had in various mingled their fingers in it not only disapproved of the meeting of “understanding” of the leaders with the Grand Vizier, but did their best to fight against the Pasha of Janina and intending to use his inevitable end to carry it on the rails of a Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire, concluding that Ali Pasha’s uprising could serve as a good impetus for it to turn into a Greek issue of European proportions, where it was intended to go.

On April 2, 1821, those who had refused to attend the meeting of “understanding” with the Grand Vizier (among them the heretics such as the bishop of Patras, Germanos and the leaders of Mani), who considered Ypsilantis’ uprising as the beginning of the Greek war for independence, threw themselves into the uprising. The uprising, in which many Russian and foreign emissaries, mostly Tibdil soldiers, took part, turned their weapons against the Muslim population, Ottoman officials, ulema and merchants, whereupon, after the fall of the city of Tripoli, unprecedented massacres took place against the defenseless population, where about 40,000 people are said to have been killed, a large part of them Arvanites of the Muslim faith.

This behavior, which had been anticipated from the outside, indicating that the future Greek state would be only for Christians, regardless of the fact that many of them were of the same blood and ethnicity as those who had accepted Islam, would terrify the philological historian George Finlay, who described one of these massacres with the following words:

“Human beings have rarely been able to commit so many cruel acts on an equal number of their fellow citizens as they did in this case... Women and children were subjected to constant torture and then killed. Forty-eight hours after taking the city, the Greek purposely gathered about two thousand people of all ages and genders, mostly women and children, and led them to an abyss on the nearest mountain, leaving not a single living soul.”⁹⁶³

With massacre following massacre a group of Janissaries, on Easter Sunday in 1821, hung Patriarch Gregor V at the gate of the Church of Phanar, despite the fact that he had condemned

⁹⁶⁰ Glenny, Misha, cit. op., p. 26.

⁹⁶¹ For more on the cooperation of Ali Pasha of Janina with “Heteria” See e “*Life of Ali Pascha of Janina*”, London, 1823; “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, I, Tiranë, 2002; Brun, Conrad-Malte: “*Për Shqipërinë dhe Shqiptarët*” Tiranë, pp. 171-226; Arvanitos: “*Historia e Ali Pashë Tepelenës*”, (in Greek), Athens, 1895; Castellas, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë, 1999, p. 282; Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, pp. 27-28.

⁹⁶² “The Greek revolution broke out because the Ottomans mistakenly decided to subdue the only one who could have prevented that uprising - Ali Pasha.” (See Denis N. Skitios: “*Ali Pasha’s Last Gamble*”, in “*Hellenism and the Greek War of Liberation (1821-1830)*”: Continuity and Change, ed. Diamando Uroš, Thessaloniki, 1976, p. 97.)

⁹⁶³ Finlay, George: “*A History of Greece from Its Conquests by the Romans to the Present Time*”, Oxford, 1877, vol. VI, pp. 218-219.

the insurgents. Revenge fell on many bishops and a large number of Greeks in Istanbul and other cities.⁹⁶⁴

This war, which in many parts of Greece took on the dimensions of a fratricidal war, nevertheless hid its true dimensions. It was placed on a religious plain as a war of Ottoman rule against the Greek Christian population, which fought for freedom instead of Albanians of the Orthodox faith (Arvanites) fighting against their brothers of the Muslim faith. As the uprising was increasingly taking on the dimensions of a civil war and could slip away from the projects envisaged from abroad, especially from Russia, it was demanded that it be channeled through legitimacy from within by extracting a center that would take over the proclamation of the Greek state. This was made possible by an agreement that “Hetaria” concluded with the clerical leader, T. Kolokotronis. In December 1821, a constitutional assembly convened in Epidaurus, drafting a constitution entrusting executive power to five of its members, each from a province. This first Greek government was established in Missolonghi and was headed by the Phanariot Mavrokordatos, and on January 18, 1822 declared the independence of Greece.⁹⁶⁵

The Missolonghi government did not last long. It was an internal turmoil as well as the rivalries between the various groups that led to its failure. Kolokotronis, dissatisfied with the Phanariot Mavrokordatos, called a second assembly in Astros, where he also settled accounts with Mavrokordatos (by arresting him). On the occasion, the winner was another Arvanites, G. Kunduriotis, who, after dismissing Kolokotronis from any command post, placed the government in Kranidi, opposite the island of Speca, inhabited mainly by the Arvanites, who were still at the helm of insurgency.

But the Speci government too failed to legitimize itself as an open war had already broken out between two rival internal currents: that of the Peloponnese and Continental Greece and the Islands, where the Arvanites were heavily influential as they led the navy, as well as held many islands and able to withstand the Ottoman army.

Under these conditions, after quenching the revolt of Ali Pasha Tepelena, Sultan Mahmud II, realizing that the internal divisions among the insurgents were intensifying by opening mistrust in some circles, decided to give a deserved response to the Greek uprising. This time he called for help his vassal Mehmed Ali, the Pasha of Egypt, who was already in Crete, where he had intervened after the island was promised to his Pashalik along with the promise that his son, Ibrahim, would be appointed governor of Morea, who settled there and began preparations for further action in accordance with the agreements with the Sultan. In 1825 Ibrahim landed in the Peloponnese. The Greek insurgents were unable to withstand his army, modernized and militarily trained by French advisers. Ibrahim’s successful landing in the Peloponnese was followed by the military operations of the Ottoman army in the northern part of the country, which, without any difficulty, one by one, broke all the hearths of the insurgents. Missolonghi fell in April 1826, and the Acropolis of Athens experienced the same fate in June.

Although the Greek insurgents suffered heavy defeats, it was the European intervention that not only did not allow the Ottoman Empire to feel victorious in this situation, but did its best until it gave life to the new Christian state - Greece.

Of course, for the birth of such a state, as it was seen, platforms had been prepared in line with the Russian and other European powers scenario: Austria-Hungary, England and France plans were preceded by an atmosphere of the birth of Philhellenism based on antiquity background, where the Greeks were recognized for their merits with the creation of a Greek state that had to present a kind of retribution for this “civilizing merit”. This made many of the famous authors and poets of the time (Goethe, Byron, Chatobrian, and others)⁹⁶⁶ to support this idea and

⁹⁶⁴ See Castellan, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë 1991, p. 283.

⁹⁶⁵ See at length: Finlay, George: “*A History of Greece from Its Conquests by the Romans to the Present Time*”, Oxford, 1877, vol. VI.

⁹⁶⁶ The great English poet, Lord Byron, was among the first to join the Greek uprising. In Janina he met Ali Pasha and made a friendship with him, which he reflected in his poetic work “*Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*”, where Albanians and Albania are

even appeal to European volunteers to join in that war, even though many of them will be disappointed once they come in contact with a country that was far from the paradigms they had on classical antiquity.⁹⁶⁷

Despite the notions of classical antiquity, which continued throughout Europe, the Greek uprising followed the scenarios that inspired and produced it. Thus, Russia, which had created “Hetarina” providing them with weapons, with the coming to power of Nicholas II (who had replaced Alexander I on the throne after his sudden death in December 1825), together with England, came up with a project for the mediation of the great powers in the conflict on the basis of creating an autonomous Greek state according to the model of the Danubian Principalities. A year later, the Russian tsar, through an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire demanding that Moldova, Wallachia and Serbia comply with the provisions of Article 8 of the Bucharest Treaty, tried to use international pressure on the Porte about Greece to bring these provinces under the control of the Russian protectorate, a fact that would be unacceptable to England and France. To prevent this, they hastened, together with Russia, to sign the Treaty of London of July 1827, restoring the foundations of the St. Petersburg Protocol: mediation and creation of an autonomous Greek state within the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁶⁸

As an arena of treaties for the creation of the Greek state (three of them from the first of 1827 to the third 1830), London showed a complex approach of the great European powers to it, which, in addition to reconciliation in principle, was permeated by the interests of various, frequently fraught with contradictions and numerous backstages, which could even lead to explosions against each other.

Finally, after the defeat at Navarino, when the Ottoman Empire lost almost most of its navy and the departure of Mehmed Ali’s Egyptian army from the Peloponnese, as well as after the Russian-Ottoman war of 1829 with the Ottoman Empire withdrawing weakened, the three great powers, issuing the Sultan a guarantee of protection from Mehmed Ali of Egypt and his commitment to take the throne of the Empire, whose armies were in Syria, forced the Porte to accept the London Protocol. It was sanctioned internationally as a treaty in London on February 3, 1830, creating a still Sultan’s vassal Greek state with a government entrusted to a king chosen by the three great powers and a territory bordered by the Arta-Volos line, as the border between Greece and the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁶⁹

Although the Greek state went through some extremely difficult stages of internal disputes that in some cases took on the dimensions of civil war, for not being a product of a natural connection of different ethnic, social and linguistic structures, different with each other, but part of a project from abroad, which had bypassed these factors and their features, however, in July 1832 it recognized the independence of Greece against a reward payment of 13 million gold francs. In February 1833, Otto of Bavaria - Hellenized – chosen by the three great powers - set foot in his new kingdom, in a new Christian state, independent Greece, thus emerging in the Balkans.⁹⁷⁰

Serbia self-rule and Greek independence, as new facts on the political map of the European part of the Ottoman Empire, set in motion almost all Albanians at home and abroad, as these two countries soon proclaimed their hegemonic national platforms: Serbs with “*Načertanije*” and Greeks with “*Megali idea*”, associated with them as a people and their ethnic space being dually threatened. With both of these national programs appearing at the same time (mid-1844) and relying on hegemonic expansionism, they did not differ in terms of anti-Albanian goals, but only in the strategy of action and the means they would use. Serbs appeared in the role of the

presented on a romantic image as a noble, generous, and warlike people. It is the merit of this great writer that the Greek revolution was objectively reflected, seeing the great role of the Albanians (Arvanites) in it. He died in 1823 in Missolonghi surrounded by cholera.

⁹⁶⁷ Castellán, Georges: “*Histori e Ballkanit*”, Tiranë, 1991, p. 285.

⁹⁶⁸ Idem, p. 286.

⁹⁶⁹ Idem, p. 287.

⁹⁷⁰ Idem, p. 288.

Piedmont of Panslavism in the Balkans and therefore had the direct support of Russia, including that of France, which appeared to be more prudent in relation to the interests of other peoples and those of the great powers in the region. The Greeks focused on the Orthodox religion and the axiom “Who is Orthodox, is Greek and who is a Greek is an Orthodox”, conjuring up hegemonic plans within Hellenization to be put into action after the creation of the Greek state onwards, mainly to the detriment of the Albanian Orthodox factor emerging as a majority in Epirus, Morea and Athens, at the core of the Greek state.

The perfidy of Hellenization through Hellenism was initially misunderstood by Orthodox Albanians, who would be very devoted to the 1822-1829 wars leading to the independence of Greece. In fact, some of the important and deserving members of the Albanian national awakening and the spread of Albanianism, such as Thimi Mitko and others, who initially saw Hellenism as a collaborator or supporter of Albanianism to identify with that current building up plans on it for a common state of the two peoples, a confusion that in some certain Albanian political and intellectual circles, in various forms, continued till the eve of independence. So, during further treatment, Albanians had to shed a lot of effort to draw a clear line between Hellenism and Albanianism, and even put them on the same track of opposition to Islam. Only in that way did the national movement clarify the fog both from inside and outside produced by the Greek “Megali idea” and the trap of Orthodoxy, which, culturally, socially and politically, was similar to that of Islam.⁹⁷¹

Here, in fact, one finds the impact that Serbs will have on other Slavic peoples of the Balkans towards the promotion of their independence movements and the difficulties that Hellenism produced based on the foundations of the “*Megali idea*”, especially among Bulgarians and Albanians, as well as the consequences that will arise when the Ottoman Empire, after realizing its destructive idea, will allow the Bulgarian *exarchate*,⁹⁷² which will practically open the issue of Bulgaria’s independence, but also that of Macedonia as a pre-programmed crisis.⁹⁷³ The exarchate and the reality that the ecclesiastical division produced provoked a fierce and very dangerous rivalry in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, especially in the vilayet of Thessaloniki and that of Manastir with a mixed population, where the majority were Albanians and Bulgarians, with Greeks and a few Serbs, completely instrumentalized by Belgrade and their project to “restore old Serbia” in accordance with the myth of Kosova, fighting for the Ottoman remnants to be plundered beyond an ethnic criteria, a trend mostly detrimental to the Albanians.

DERVISH CARA’S REBELLION

The end of the rebellion of the Albanian pashas: Bushatlis of Shkodra and Ali Pasha Tepelena, on one hand, and the independence of Greece raised mainly on the uprising of the Albanian Orthodox factor in it and the establishment of an autonomous Serbia, on the other hand, with the proclamation of Tanzimat Reforms in Northern Albania in 1843, were followed by a wave of uprisings that spread widely.

The reasons for the uprising were specifically direct as the replacement of Albanian officials with foreign officials and the order to recruit Nizam soldiers affected their existential interests in the circumstances. The recruitment of Nizam soldiers, in a duration of 5 to 15 years

⁹⁷¹ Frashëri, Mehdi: “*Historia e lashtë e Shqipërisë*”, Tiranë, 2012, pp. 35-38.

⁹⁷² *Exarchate* (viceroy of Byzantium). The Sublime Porte allowed the Bulgarian Exarchate to be independent of the Roman patriarch, thus separating the Bulgarian Orthodox from Greek-dominated Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul. This decision of the Sublime Porte of 1870, although of a religious nature, brought great changes, as the Bulgarians gained with it the right of their autocephalous church and the expression of religious identity outside the Greek influence, which until then was powerful and equated religious identity with national identity, precisely in accordance with the “Megali Idea”, succeeding in accelerating the process of national independence.

⁹⁷³ See: Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kosova*” I-V, Book III – Ottoman Empire, Prishtina, 2015, pp. 80-88.

of service, in addition to harming families was followed by bringing down local military structures (*basibozukes*) in the service of local feudal lords. Through them, they defended their autonomy, which was established within the self-rule system (a kind of provincial autonomy) that the Ottoman Empire had aligned with the Albanians from the beginning, where the Kanun regulated domestic life and property relations. This agreement allowed most Albanians, especially in the North, to maintain internal self-rule as well as ethnicity, the source of the force of local feudal lords, who, in the new circumstances, as in the case of the Pasha of Shkodra and Janina, had turned into extensive movements for autonomy up to secession from the High Porte.

The Tanzimat reforms, in the name of profound social and political change, imposed by the great powers, had to fight precisely the factors that had turned the Ottoman Empire hostage to these forces, including the overthrow of autonomous feudal lords and their military power based on the order of the Janissaries and *basibozuks*, appearing as the first and foremost condition, which meant confrontation with these structures. This development, which meant great changes in the administrative structure, envisaging in the name of the principle of equality of all citizens before the law and their freedoms representation for those who had had been deprived to the day (*raya* - Christian population), in administration, police and others, inevitably went through the reformation of feudal military structures (*basibozuk*) representing the main pillar of local feudal lords and their power and return to regular army in accordance with the new circumstances. This meant a double confrontation: both with local feudal lords, based on the *Sipahi* system, and with local military formations, closely linked to the feudal lords and the salaries they received from them being deprived of their power.

Of course, touching upon these local structures of economic and military power that supervised the entire all the feudal power was accompanied by a campaign to replace local officials with other officials (mainly sent from the center, including also members of minorities). Causing uncertainty and fear that the Empire, with the recognition of independent and autonomous states (Greece, Serbia and others), had begun to betray the interests of Albanians, played a major role in mobilizing the population against these changes. This was best seen in the summer of 1843, as in some northern cities, first in Prizren and then in Gjakova, Peja, Prishtina, and elsewhere, new Turkish officials were expelled.⁹⁷⁴

Such reactions of the population in some northern cities did not stop the actions of the High Porte to impose reforms on the Albanians. Since the deportation of the new Turkish officials was not followed by any other organized action, nor by any extensive interconnection, as had happened in Shkodra six years before, when after major protests against recruitment the Empire temporarily ceased the actions, the Ottoman army in these parts did not find it difficult to suppress them. Similarly, some isolated reactions towards Luma, which were quickly quenched, gave the impression that the lesson that the Albanians had taken in the case of the uprising of the Shkodra Pasha led by the Bushatlis and those in the south against Ali Pasha Tepelena had left the Albanians without any large-scale acting power, as expected.

But when it was thought that the implementation of reforms in northern Albania would go somehow and that various sources indicated that in some parts, despite the difficulties, the recruitment of residents of the insurgent areas for the new Ottoman army, which were sent from Thessaloniki to Istanbul was being successfully implemented,⁹⁷⁵ It turned out that another area, that of Western Macedonia, with Shkupi as its capital, had become a hotbed of insurgency, spreading rapidly to other parts of the country to reach very large and disturbing proportions, even as they appeared organized and with political demands.

It was about the Dervish Cara uprising, which began in Gostivar in November 1843 and within two to three months expanded to different parts of the country. The Dervish Cara uprising

⁹⁷⁴ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", II, Tiranë, 2002, p. 92.

⁹⁷⁵ See the report of the English Consul in Thessaloniki, H. Leyard of 23 May 1843 addressed to London at Matkovski, Aleksandar: "*Kryengritja e Dërvish Carës*" ("*Dervish Cara's Uprising*"), Tetovë, 2012, p. 48. It deals with a contingent of 700 Albanians, who, on the "Yeni Dynia" ship left Thessaloniki for Istanbul.

was linked to the arrival of Ottoman forces under the leadership of Hayredin Pasha, who had undertaken to recruit new soldiers, mostly by force, which led to numerous revolts.

In fact, the Dervish Cara uprising, which erupted in the summer of 1843, although a response to Hayredin Pasha's campaign, was fueled by developments in the last two or three years, when the High Porte, as part of the settling of accounts with local pashas resisting the Tanzimat reforms, executed the Tetova Pashas, brothers Hivzi Pasha in Skopje, Hysen Pasha in Kyustendil and Abdurrahman Pasha in Tetova, who ruled as semi-independent.⁹⁷⁶

Although the Pasha brothers are said to have been summoned to Istanbul because of a conflict over property, they were imprisoned as they refused to be involved in the recruitment campaign in the areas they ruled. Thus the first two were exiled to Anatolia, while Hivzi Pasha died in prison, in 1843, after poisoning.⁹⁷⁷

The news of the death of Hivzi Pasha was received with the outbreak of the Dervish Cara uprising, which was a relative of Husein Pasha. After getting rid of Abdurrahman Pasha and his replacement with his brother, Xheladin Bey, local forces against the eliminated Pasha (basibozuks and others under his supervision) began to disobey the recruitment orders. Among these units was one led by Dërvish Cara, appointed commander of law enforcement forces in Gostivar by Xheladin Bey. Dërvish Cara, instead of carrying out Xheladin Bey's orders to collect recruits, did the opposite. With his many supporters from the ranks of the basibozuks, who sought to maintain their positions in the face of the regular army, he opposed the Sultan's laws. In Gostivar, surrounded by numerous supporters, ready to restore the old military order, he declared disobedience against the Porte and "was proclaimed king of the many basibozuks".⁹⁷⁸

From Gostivar, Dervish Cara left for Tetova. At its entrance, he encountered the Xheladin Bey's mercenaries who put up a strong resistance. A few days passed and after a complete siege from all sides, together with Bey, they left in the direction of Shkup. In Tetova, Dërvish Cara set up a rebel center demanding that the Sultan repeal the order to recruitment. On the contrary, he threatened to leave for Istanbul.⁹⁷⁹

The capture of Tetova by insurgents, establishing public order, provoked the response of those already determined against the reforms and ready to join the Dervish Cara's movement. Tetova was full of detached units of basibozuks and mercenaries of expropriated feudal lords coming from different parts. It was estimated that within a few days, Dervish Cara's troops numbered 4,000, so much so that on the eve of the Shkup attack, the Austrian consul, Ippen, put the number at 10,000.⁹⁸⁰ In Shkup, Dervish Cara's insurgents forced the order and sent requests to Istanbul to give up recruitment. The gathering of the insurgents in Shkup also set in motion the basibozuks and other insurgent forces - opponents of recruitment, on the side of Kumanova and Kosova. In Kumanova, insurgent groups were already formed to take over the city center. At their head was Bajram Vaksiçani, who accepted Dervish Cara as "Commander-in-chief". In Kumanova, the insurgents, in addition to opposing the reforms of the new army, also demanded the cessation of all administrative and political reforms. There were also religious fanatics among them who demanded that the Empire be returned to the Sharia law.⁹⁸¹

The capture of Kumanova was followed by new incursions in the direction of Kriva Palanka and Vranje. In Kriva Palanka, the insurgents did not encounter any resistance. There, other detached units of the basibozuks joined in, seeking to restore the former power, or in the service of the local feudal lords, rejecting the Tanzimat reforms. The insurgents entered Vranje on April 12.

⁹⁷⁶ Matkovski, Aleksandar: "*Kryengritja e Dërvish Carës*", Tetovë, 2012, pp. 54-56.

⁹⁷⁷ Idem.

⁹⁷⁸ Idem.

⁹⁷⁹ Тосковски: "*Зборник на народни умотворенија, наука и книзнина*", Софје, 1894, pp. 418-420.

⁹⁸⁰ L. Mile: "*Rreth kryengritjës shqiptare në çerkun e dytë të shekullit XIX, e sidomos rreth kryengritjës së Kosovës të vitit 1844*" "*On the Albanian uprising in the second quarter of the 19th century, and especially on the Kosovo uprising of 1844*"), in *Studime historike*, XX-III, 2, Tiranë, 1966, p. 144.

⁹⁸¹ Василевич, J.X: "*Јужна Стара Србија*", I, p.483.

At the same time, the uprisings broke out in the part of the Kaza of Prishtina (Prizren and Gjakova) and in Shkodra. Here, too, the insurgents reiterated demands against reforms and recruitment with the threat of a joint offensive against Istanbul. During the summer, the insurgents also took Dibra and Mat.

Despite these short-term successes, which can be attributed to the local government's rebellion against the center and the great influence of the former in relation to the former, the organizational connections of the insurgents around a common inter-provincial center remain unclear. The impression is that they reflect the revolt of certain groups from the disintegrating feudal military formations, which lost their jobs as well as the influence within their local security structures. According to some sources, the uprisings in Prishtina, Gjakova, Prizren and Shkodra, although of the same nature (against recruitment and reforms), did not share the same insurgent council, except that they were in solidarity with each other.⁹⁸²

Despite this, the extension of the uprising from the Polog part to Shkup and further to Leskovac, as well as its spread to Prishtina, Prizren, Gjakova, Peja and Shkodra, forced the Ottoman government to enter into talks with the leaders of the uprising. The relevant reference was Dërvis̄h Cara, one of those who had gathered around him mostly basibozuk and other armed forces ready for insurrection. During the talks the representatives of the Ottoman government had with Dërvis̄h Cara and some other leaders in Prishtina, Prizren, Gjakova, and elsewhere, the insurgents mainly demanded the withdrawal of the law on compulsory military service and the replacement of Ottoman local government officials who did not speak the Albanian language. Some sources speak of a demand for an autonomy of Albania to be recognized, within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, the way Serbia's autonomy was recognized in 1830.⁹⁸³ This demand is not reflected in any commendable document, except as explicitly stated in the consular reports.⁹⁸⁴

On the contrary, during talks with Dervish Cara once near Katlanova, British mediator Austen Henry Layard, authorized by Omer Pasha, said that Cara had reiterated his demand for the repeal of the law on compulsory military service, though promising that he would possibly supply the Sultan with irregular military troops under the command of one of his commanders.⁹⁸⁵

Talks with the insurgents and the mediation missions of foreign diplomats, such as Layard, during the summer of 1844, were used by the Ottoman Empire for military training to settle accounts with the insurgents after several attempts were made to divide them by seducing some of them in different ways. Of course, an offensive that Omer Pasha had prepared in early spring had served both the internal and external needs of the Porte, on the one hand to demonstrate its readiness to continue the campaign against the disintegrated structures of the Janissaries and their collaborators who which no longer agreed, especially in the Albanian vilayets with the support of local feudal lords who rejected the Tanzimat reforms, and on the other hand, to prove to the great powers, who demanded an implementation of the reforms hastily, that they would be implemented though not hastily as the stability of the country was threatened if everything were to be seen through the weapon.

Of course, during this time, Omer Pasha had geared up a contingent of 32 thousand soldiers in Constantinople to take part in the large-scale campaign, which, in addition to eliminating the insurgent forces (basibozuks and other feudal units) would also deal with violent recruitment that was being rejected. From mid-May 1844, the elite units of the Ottoman army, commanded by Omer Pasha, headed to Shkup, Tetova, Kumanova and Karadak of Shkup. In

⁹⁸² Brestovci, S: "*Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-serbe-malazeze*" ("*Albanian-Serbian-Montenegrin relations*"), Prishtinë, p. 126.

⁹⁸³ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", II, Tiranë, 2002, p. 92.

⁹⁸⁴ Matkovski, Aleksandar: "*Kryengritja e Dervish Carës*", Tetovë, 2012, pp. 223-226.

⁹⁸⁵ See memories of the British diplomat Austen Henri Layard (1817-1894) "*Autobiography and Letters from his Childhood until his appointment as H. H. Ambassador at Madrid*", vol. I-II, London, 1903, where he talks about his mediation mission to the Albanian insurgents (to Dërvis̄h Cara), authorized by Omer Pasha, in which case he decisively mentions among the main causes of the uprising the fact that the insurgents did not agree to provide regular troops and did not want to implement any new reforms that the Porte wanted to implement in those areas."

addition to the vanguard, he used the artillery and other mountain units targeting for days insurgent positions. Unable to face a frontal battle, insurgent forces withdrew from the towns in the direction of Katlanovo Gorge. From 13-17 May 1844, fierce fighting took place in these parts. On May 18, after a bloody clash near the Katlanovo Banja, the insurgents were forced to withdraw. After three days, the Ottoman army took Shkup setting back its administration. On the occasion, many of the arrested, imprisoned insurgents were sent to Istanbul.⁹⁸⁶

The Ottoman army offensive continued throughout the summer. Omer Pasha's military units left Shkup heading for Tetova, Gostivar, Kumanova, as well as to Presheva, Bujanoc, and Vranje, where they regained Ottoman power. At the same time, a part of Omer Pasha's army, heading from Kaçanik to Prishtina continued to Prizren, Gjakova, Peja, ending up in Shkodra. The dealings of the Ottoman army against the insurgents and their centers destroyed or forced to leave the mountainous parts, were followed by those of numerous imprisonments and forceful mobilization of recruits being sent to Istanbul through Shkup and Thessaloniki.⁹⁸⁷

When it seemed that the situation had calmed down and that the High Porte had broken the strength of the Albanian uprising, and this, as it was said at least formally, paved the way for reforms in those parts with the great powers carefully eavesdropping on Christian population from where "disturbing announcements came", however, the "disconnected" uprisings returned to the part of Dibra. In November, Dibran residents convened an assembly (in the Gjorica area) led by Sheh Mustafa Zerqari, calling for the protection of autonomous rights they had long enjoyed.⁹⁸⁸

The Dibra insurgents, led by Cen Leka, ambushed Hayredin Pasha's forces in Gjorica. A bloody battle took place on the edge of Radika, with many losses, especially for the Ottoman army. Despite this, the Dibran insurgents were unable to maintain the front lines because the Ottoman armies were able to face their losses with new forces, while they could not so many of them retreated.

The uprising resumed also in the mountainous areas of Reka of Gjakova, Bytyç, Tropoja, Gashi and Krasniqe. It was led by Binak Alia and Sokol Arami. In May 1945, several thousand insurgents liberated Gjakova and its environs. After a month, they were forced to leave because numerous Ottoman military forces surrounded the entire country, from where a major purge campaign began. On the occasion, Mehmed Reshit Pasha imprisoned over a thousand people in those parts. Though, some of them, along with two thousand others in the prisons of Istanbul and other parts of Anatolia, were amnestied by the Sultan.

Although the Ottoman government temporarily postponed the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms in the kazas of Prishtina, Shkup, and Shkodra, and declared two amnesties over the next two to three years, the uprisings continued in other parts of the country. In the south, where constant campaigns of the Ottoman army against *komita* groups occurred, this tense situation that slowed down or in some parts even excluded the announced reforms of the Ottoman Empire for an indefinite period of time. With that, an impression was created from the outside that Istanbul was not only willing of enforcing them, as the character of a despotic-obscurantist society was changing, but moreover, it feared that they represented nothing more than a possibility for the European part falling prey to further ambitions of Slav-Orthodox countries towards this part nourished by the nationalist movements turning already into hegemonic projects by the Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians.

That the implementation or non-implementation of the Tanzimat reforms would be used equally for these purposes as shown by the Albanian uprisings against them in recent years and their rejection character. This rejection gradually led to the demand that the "protection of privileges", as it emerged from the first interpretations from opposite perspectives, be linked to

⁹⁸⁶ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar" II, Tiranë, 2002, p. 93.

⁹⁸⁷ Idem.

⁹⁸⁸ Idem.

Albanian autonomy, which hegemonic pretenders to ethnic Albanian areas (Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians) saw as very dangerous. Therefore, for the circumstances, this had to be condemned as a “threat to the Christians posed by the movement of the Albanian basibozuks”, who used the uprising against the reforms against the Christian population, and by looting their property, evictions and destruction of Orthodox monasteries.⁹⁸⁹

Visibly, this discourse against Albanians and the condemnation of all their demands for autonomy, emerging gradually and attaining the form of political programs during the assembly of the Albanian League of Prizren made the European vilayets of the Ottoman Empire, mainly the Albanian ones (Kosovo, Shkodra, Janina and Bitola) together with that of Thessaloniki be placed under constant surveillance and even international supervision at the end of the century, when the Macedonian Crisis will come to light as a political crisis, staged by Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks to divide the Albanian ethnicity.

PAN-SLAVISM AND THE BALKAN NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

Beginning with the Tanzimat reforms, which were brought by Sultan Abdulmejid I (1839-1861), the Ottoman Empire strived for modernization in all areas, following the model of developed western countries. For this, it had also won the support of Great Britain, which after the final withdrawal of Venice from the Mediterranean waters, after having dominated for the last five centuries, now appeared as a great naval power with clear claims to oversee the Mediterranean including the sea routes leading to India. Unlike other major European powers, whose interests in the Ottoman Empire were already seen as consistent with waiting for the day when it won't be able to reach its promised limits beginning its final downfall, Great Britain intended to back its remaining power in order to benefit, rather than engage in an uncertain sharing of the prey. Of course, the British were in direct opposition to their temporary “ally”, Russia, which did its best to dismantle the Ottoman Empire from within, mainly through nationalist movements in the European part of the Slav-Orthodox countries it oversaw. It aimed at benefiting as much as possible, but always keeping in mind that it should not get into a conflict with the Europeans, first and foremost with Austrian-Hungarians, who also had their own interests in the matter and were committed to following this development in accordance with their interests, although they were careful of maintaining balances with others. However, Russia was convinced that if it lured Great Britain to the detriment of other claimants, Austria-Hungary and France, then the Russian dream of full occupation of the Black Sea and access to the Mediterranean Sea through an occupation of the Bosphorus and the Marmara Straits would

⁹⁸⁹ About the alleged anti-Slavic and anti-Serb character of the Albanian uprisings of the eighties of the nineteenth century, respectively the uprising of Dervish Cara see: Јован Хаџи Васиљевић: “*Јужна Србија I – Област Куманова*”, Београд, 1909; “*Јужна Србија II - Област Прешево*“, Београд, 1913, and “*Скорје и његова околина*“, Београд, 1930. In these publications, Hadji Vasiljevic sees almost all Albanian uprisings from this time until 1912 of “anti-Slav and anti-Serbian character”. According to the Serbian historian, the Albanian uprisings against Tanzimat were hatched in part by the Sublime Porte Gate itself, which was unwilling to implement reforms, and by Austria-Hungary, which was interested in the Albanian element, calling it “savage and without civilization” to be used to create “an Albanian Islamic state” in the Balkans, which would be set up “in the Serbian cradle - in Kosovo”, a state that would be in line with Vienna's interests in the Balkans. According to Vasiljevic, the uprising of Dervish Cara was an uprising against Serbs and their churches. To illustrate this, he brings up fabricated records of hundreds of Serbs killed, massacred, of many dilapidated and destroyed monasteries, which are refuted by reports from British, Austrian, French, Italian, and other consuls who oversaw closely these developments. This is especially true of the British diplomat Henry Layard, who has left many notes about the Dervish Cara's uprising and the meetings he had with the insurgents in some parts, who says that “reports of massacres against the Serb population were exaggerated and perhaps unfounded at all”. Layard also brings the statements of the Albanian insurgents about what they called slander “saying that there was nothing of what was said, because everything was slander by the Turks, in order to tarnish their just demands.” It was also clear from the insurgents' statements that “from what was said about the oppression of Christians there was nothing but the collection of taxes from the time of their oversight” which they claimed were “legitimate, so they collected them from people of all faiths and backgrounds”. The British diplomat says that “the insurgents in no way mistreated the Christians, who were their brothers and who were never disturbed because of their faith...”

be realized after placing them under permanent supervision. In this regard, Tsar Nicholas, in January 1853, summoned to the imperial palace the English ambassador of Petrograd, informing him of the following:

“We have a sick patient in front of us. A very sick man. It would be a great disgrace if he slipped away from us before we took the necessary measures.”⁹⁹⁰

Of course, there is also the metaphor of the “*Sick Man of Bosphorus*”, which turned into a special formula serving both the politics and diplomacy of the Great European Powers from that time onwards indeed till the Ottoman Empire fell forever eighty and more years later.

Although the words of the Russian Tsar were heeded, he never succeeded in luring Great Britain into the game, despite the promise that as a bargain they would take Crete and Egypt, thus meeting their demands regarding ambitions to gain strength as a great naval power.

However, although rejected by the British and even being warned that the British interests required a reformed Ottoman Empire in order to preserve its position, the Russian Tsar continued to seek cooperation without faltering to put direct pressure on the Ottoman Empire making it difficult for it to reform from within, mostly by inflicting divisions by Slav-Orthodox population and their nationalist movements that it supervised and were already on the eve of the proclamation of Greece as an independent state and of the autonomy for Serbia and the Moldovan provinces. Thus, in March 1853, Tsar Nicholas sent an ultimatum to Istanbul, which included the recognition of the rights of the Greek church on the Holy Land of Palestine and the recognition of Russia as the protector of all Christian Greeks on Turkish soil. The ultimatum was presented by Prince Mensikov, known for his ruthless military conduct.⁹⁹¹

Of course, the Sublime Porte, after presenting the matter to the United Kingdom, was quickly backed by London. Ambassador Lord Stratford personally assured the Sultan that the Porte would not be allowed to lose its sovereignty over its citizens. As for the request concerning the Holy Land, as it posed no danger to the Empire, except that Russia confronted it with other contenders to secure the same, it advised that this demand be met.⁹⁹²

With British support, the Sublime Porte rejected Russia’s demand for recognition of the right of Russians to be the protector of all Christian Greeks on imperial land, a right that on these grounds extended to Serbs and other Orthodox. This led to the breakdown of diplomatic relations between the Tsar and the Sultan.

Indeed, the rejection of the Russian demand constituted the key point of change between British policy to preserve the Ottoman Empire for as much as possible and, in accordance with its own interests and Russian policy, destroy it.

This political rivalry appeared to be a good trigger for a new future Russian war against the Ottoman Empire, the sixth in a row since 1695 when Peter the Great had conquered the port of Azov signing at the Karlovic peace of 1699 a treaty with the Sultan taking over the northern part of the Black Sea. Unlike other wars, when the Russians, even when they lost, had made great gains, such as allowing free navigation on the Danube, later the Black Sea, and crossing the Bosphorus Strait with permission, this time it demanded the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire on the pretext that it was not implementing reforms related to the improvement of the position of Christians in the Empire, especially in the European part, eyeing especially the Bulgarians and Serbs as its main supporters extending the influence to this vital part from which it would appear even more powerful.

With other European countries at least not opposing the “cause” of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, while seeing Britain’s interest in support of the sultan as a matter of its further strengthening that threatened them, it seemed that the new war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was inevitable, a war that would involve Great Britain, which had already given full support to the Sultan in rejecting the Russian ultimatum.

⁹⁹⁰ Schevill, Ferdinand: “*Ballkani – historia dhe qytetërimi*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 292.

⁹⁹¹ Idem, p. 292.

⁹⁹² Idem.

Wishing to directly annoy the Sublime Porte and at the same time test Britain on its readiness to enter the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire, in July of that year Russia ordered the army to cross the Prut River and conquer the Danube Principalities. The Ottoman Empire reacted and, with the threat of war, demanded an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from there. Britain's reluctance to send Russia a note calling for its withdrawal prompted Russia to see it as a British indecision, so the Tsar ordered the Russian admiral of the Black Sea to attack the Ottoman fleet anchored in Sinop, destroying it. This news shocked London and caused the "English lion" to come out of its den and rightly so, as with the destruction of the Ottoman naval power, the Russians could quickly reach the Bosphorus and there was no more time for the rest.⁹⁹³

Thus, Great Britain quickly entered into a war with Russia, which was in fact a war for the destruction, as Russia demanded, or the preservation of the Ottoman Empire, at least for a time for which the European powers would agree, as Great Britain demanded. Although the British were convinced that they would be supported by Austria and Prussia, which also had their own interests, the Ottoman Empire would be maintained as long as necessary, but by no means destroyed in accordance with the Russia's plans, much less through force. However, these countries pursued a policy of non-interference, with France joining, as Napoleon III had reason to retaliate against the Russians, and at the same time saw a good opportunity to appear alongside the British as overseers of maritime waters of the Mediterranean and the roads leading through Egypt to India and beyond.

This war, in which Great Britain and France sided with the Ottoman Empire against Russia, is known as the Crimean War, as it relates to the Allied attack on the Crimean peninsula, in the southern part of the Russian coast in the Black Sea.

Although this war lasted more than a year and the British and French forces landed in Crimea to take Sevastopol in order to teach Russia a good lesson from there, to adhere to European interests in this part, so that it would not consider the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans did not consider it a booty. Despite the capture of Sevastopol in March 1855 by Allied forces, that would not ruin Russia militarily (as this was not even in the interest of the victors). However, the political goal was reached as Russia had to consent with the outcome of the war and submit to a peace agreement. On the occasion, an agreement was reached to hold a peace congress in Paris in March 1856. Austria and Prussia also attended.

The Paris Congress was led by Great Britain, which was the winner of the war and able to dictate conditions. Among these, the most important were those that stripped Russia of its ambitions to decide the fate of the Ottoman Empire and the East. Thus, it was decided that it would lose the benefits to the Ottoman Empire it enjoyed by the peace Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji of 1774. The treaty also forced the Tsar to renounce all his claims to protect the Christian Greeks living in the Sultan's territory. Russia also lost the right to defend Serbia and the Romanian principalities of Moldova and Wallachia. Finally, Russia was banned from sailing on the Danube with the surrender of Bessarabia into the hands of Moldavia, which had been part of Russia since 1812, and then handed over the Danube delta to the Ottoman Empire. By this measure, sailing on the lower Danube was not allowed to the Ottoman Empire, though it was placed under international supervision.

Nevertheless, Britain's biggest victory had to do with Russia's being denied the right to oversee navigation in the Black Sea. She was even barred from having warships, arsenals and naval bases within these waters.

The Ottoman Empire reaped significant benefits from the Paris Peace as an ally of victors had to be treated with respect, whereby, after securing territorial integrity, it was accepted into the ranks of the great European powers. The British had reasons to do so as the Sultan, in February 1856, before the commencement of the proceedings of the Paris Congress granted new

⁹⁹³ Idem, p. 294.

rights to his citizens. Under these rights included in the Tanzimat of 1839, the raya regime was overthrown and consequently Muslims and Christians were equated before the law, and for more, the Christian population of the Empire would now be under the supervision of the Sultan himself.⁹⁹⁴

Suffering a heavy blow at the Paris Peace, Russia, on the other hand, took the opportunity to retaliate against the Europeans for the defeat they caused at Crimea, where the right to care for Serbia was severely hurt, as they lost a supporter which could be thwarting the expansion of Russian influence in the Balkans in line with hegemonic dreams of access to the Adriatic. By proclaiming the imperial decree "*Hati-i Humayun*" treating Christians equal before the law, as the raya no longer existed as a discriminated social category and the Ottoman Empire was on its way to becoming a European constitutional monarchy, it took advantage of this, in the name of this right to incite the Slavic states of the Balkans (Serbia and Bulgaria, to fight for secession from the Ottoman Empire). Meanwhile, the Slavic peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Albanian vilayets, living as a minority, it managed to utilize to disrupt the stability of the Ottoman Empire, thus provoking an aggravated situation to prove that it was really about "the sick man of the Bosphorus" that will not last long.

In the European plain, to get rid of the lines created by the Paris Peace, Russia was given an opportunity by the German-French war of 1870, when after German victory, a united German state would be created in a year, another European power. The creation of Germany quickly changed the appearance of the great European powers and with it the ratio of forces, with Great Britain, after losing its main ally France defeated by the Germans, remaining alone, as Austria-Hungary, and later Italy, joined the axis that would soon be led by Germany as a new power.

Under these circumstances, the growing Austro-Russian proximity took place, empires determined to oversee the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the European part, dictating to it not only its dynamics but also their direct interests. Russia, in this regard, after the Prussian-French war and the creation of Germany, no longer feeling obliged to the decisions of the Paris Peace, which had taken them out of power, had begun to encourage the Balkan Slavs, in first and foremost Serbia, to demand independence from the Porte. Meanwhile, she urged the Slavs in other parts to join the Pan-Slavic movement in the Balkans based on Orthodoxy. Russia, therefore, held two cards to use for political purposes: Orthodoxy with all its ecclesiastical infrastructure in the Ottoman capital (Phanariots), and Pan-Slavism.

On these cards, always exploiting the tense atmosphere in the European parts that had erupted in the conservative Ottoman strata, rejecting Tanzimat as it meant losing power, in July 1875, the uprising of the Christian population began in Herzegovina, quickly spreading to Bosnia. Only the Christian Slavs took part in the uprising, which was heavily aided by Serbia and Montenegro, and their social demands quickly matched those of the national ones.⁹⁹⁵

Here one must not forget that this uprising, which was quickly utilized by the Russians, as well as Vienna, was preceded by the revolt of the Bosnian Muslim elite in Sarajevo, Travnik and other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina led by the Beys, Mahmut Pasha Tuzla and Hafiz Pasha, against the Tanzimat reforms, by which it lost much of its privileges, and above all the autonomous government it had enjoyed over the last two centuries. Evidently, the uprising was extinguished thanks to the great military campaign of the Porte led by Omer Pasha Latas, of Slavic origin, also known for suppressing the Albanian uprisings during 1844-1847 in the Shkup Kaza (run by Dërvish Cara) and those of Prishtina and Shkodra. After devastating Bosnia, by setting up an administration, he brought down any self-rule tendency of the Bosnian beys in these parts, and at the same time left a basibozuke government whereby the relations so far were replaced by violence and anarchy of the young local kocabases, who were equally harmful to

⁹⁹⁴ Idem, p. 296.

⁹⁹⁵ See: Šišić, Ferdo: "*Bosna i Hercegovina za vreme vezirovanje Omer-Paše Latase*", Beograd, 1938, p. 38; Muradbegović, Ahmed: "*Omer Paša Latas u Bosni, 1850-1852*", Zagreb, 1944, p. 66; Glenny, Misha: "*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*", Tiranë, pp. 73-87; Castellan, Georges: "*Histori e Ballkanit*", Tiranë 1991, pp. 336-340.

both Muslims and Christians. This period of misrule in Bosnia, with the beys being replaced by unbridled basibozuks, set the ground for new uprisings occurring twenty years later.⁹⁹⁶

Although the uprising was quelled by the intervention of the Ottoman forces, it left its glowing fuse, which Russia was constantly feeding with fire, coming back to life after a year, while in the same year the liberation uprisings broke out in Bulgaria, which were crushed by the Porte. The quenching of the Herzegovina and Bosnia uprisings prompted Russia's directed response to its allies in the Balkans to use it to secede from the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Montenegro and Serbia went through open anti-Ottoman war. Serbia on June 30 and Montenegro on July 1, 1876 declared war on the Ottoman Empire. On this occasion, Russia, in addition to international support, sent "Slavic-Orthodox brothers" thousands of Russian volunteers together, mostly military, with plenty of weapons, getting involved in the war against Turkey.

The war against the Ottoman Empire with its satellites (Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians) was backed secret projects of Austria-Hungary and Russia to arranging, according to their own interests, the political map of Southeast Europe. A few days after the war between Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire, on July 8, 1876, Austria-Hungary and Russia, by means of separate notes, made an agreement at Reichstadt of Bohemia adjusting the Balkan Peninsula according to their interests. These powers decided not to intervene militarily in the conflict between Serbia and Montenegro with the Ottoman Empire. Both sides agreed that, if the Ottoman Empire won the war, no change would be made in the political map of the Balkan Peninsula. However, in that case they would force the Sublime Porte to implement some reforms for the benefit of the Slavic population. If the other side won the war (Serbia and Montenegro), Bosnia would move mainly to Austria-Hungary and partly to Serbia, which would take part of Kosovo (its north) and Montenegro would take part of Herzegovina. Bulgaria would become an autonomous state and Rumelia an autonomous vilayet. It is worth noting that Vienna, under constant pressure from Germany, in order to prevent the creation of a large Slavic state in the Balkans, stated that Serbia should not extend to the Adriatic, nor should Bulgaria include Macedonia, as both threatened Austrian-German interests in the Aegean.⁹⁹⁷

The Austro-Hungarian note also touched upon the Albanian issue. It provided for the creation of an autonomous Albanian state. So, it may be said that for the first time the Albanian issue entered the Ring of State in the circle of European diplomacy as a political issue under Vienna supervision.⁹⁹⁸

The agreement was supplemented by another secret accord that these countries signed in Budapest on May 15, 1877, relying on the platform adopted six months earlier in the Reichstag. The annexing supplemented of the agreement was signed on June 18, 1877, under which Austria-Hungary would remain neutral in the Russian-Turkish war and, as a reward, gain the right to militarily occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this agreement, in principle, the idea of an autonomous Albanian state was accepted, counteracting the models of local "Christian" autonomies, such as the one that would later be announced by Preng Bibë Doda of Mirdita, who, under "its flag" joined the war against the Ottoman Empire on the Russian side.

The war between Serbia and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire, started and supported by Russia interested in assuring a return of what she had lost in Crimea through its offspring, was not only not being won, but the Serbs, after their invasions in the areas of Prokupa and Kursumlija, found themselves on the brink of a true disaster. The Ottoman army, on its way to march on Belgrade, was stopped by an ultimatum coming from Russia on 1st of November threatening the Sublime Porte with war if it did not halt the march against Serbia. Thus, Serbia, as the loser of the war, after four months of talks in Istanbul, achieving peace with the Sultan, came out untouched by the war.⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁶ Glenny, Misha: *"Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999"*, Tiranë, pp. 73-78.

⁹⁹⁷ *"Historia e popullit shqiptar"*, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 134.

⁹⁹⁸ Idem, p. 134.

⁹⁹⁹ See: Sumner, B. H: *"Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880"*, Oxford, 1937, p. 177.

Despite this, the war, although lost, could in some respects be considered successful for Serbia. During the first penetrations from Nish to Prokuplje and Kursumlija, the Serbian army attacked the Albanian-inhabited areas and there committed grave massacre against the vulnerable population, part of which headed to Kosovo and other areas, and to avoid a Golgotha, heading towards the Ottoman part.¹⁰⁰⁰

On this occasion, over 100,000 Muslims, mostly Albanians, were displaced from some 400 settlements, as also acknowledged by Serbian sources, although this genocide is attributed to the “liberation war from Ottoman Empire”.¹⁰⁰¹ Expelled Albanians were labeled as “invaders to Old Serbia” after accepting Islam.¹⁰⁰²

With this, Serbia had set the conditions for the invasions it will launch to these areas a year later, on the occasion of the Russian-Ottoman war.

CHAPTER FIVE EASTERN CRISIS

RUSSIAN-OTTOMAN WAR, SAN STEFANO, AND THE GREAT POWERS RESPONSE

The Russian-Ottoman war began when it seemed quite unnecessary as the Ottoman Empire, during the Constantinople Conference in December 1876, had promulgated the decree of a new Sultan’s constitution, which ended abuses and thus opened the life of Ottoman parliamentarism, which will soon be crowned with the first parliamentary elections of the country, where one third of the deputies would be Christians. There will be Albanians (Abdyl Frashëri, Mehmed Ali Vrioni and others), elected on the basis of regional representation and not nationality, as Christians had.

However, the Ottoman Empire had given direct evidence that it had begun the course of radical reforms such as the constitutional monarchy, just as the great European powers had long demanded of it, although the changes could not be as rapid as required. But for Russia, that was not enough. Therefore, in the same year, a protocol was signed in London by which the Great Powers recognized the principle of the nationalities of the Ottoman Empire and their autonomies, which, in some way, had to be supervised by them. It mentioned the peoples who gained the right to autonomy (Christians), though the Albanians were not mentioned. Although, in the meantime, there had been a claim for such a thing by the so-called Autonomous Province of Mirdita, proclaimed by Preng Bibë Doda, during Montenegro’s war with the Ottoman Empire and Serbia. Prompted by the Russians and supported by the Montenegrins, the Bayraktar of Mirdita raised the flag of the war for the autonomy of Mirdita in Orosh.

Indeed, relying on the right granted to Christian peoples to establish their autonomy in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and supported by the great powers, its Kapedan Preng Bibë Doda, son of Dodë Pasha, who since the death of his father (1868), still young, was held in exile in Istanbul on the pretext of continuing his education, during several meetings

¹⁰⁰⁰ More about the events of 1877-1878 and the penetration of the Serbian army in the part of Nish up to Kurshumlija see: Dimitrije – Mita Petrović: “*Bitka u Toplici 1877-1878*”, Jagodić, Miloš: “*Naseljavanje Kneževine Srbije 1861-1880*”, Beograd, 2004; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, II, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 136-138; Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit dhe Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit 1878*” (“*The Congress of Berlin and the Albanian League of Prizren 1878*”), Prishtinë, 2012, pp. 25-28.

¹⁰⁰¹J. Cvijić: “*Osnove za geografiju i geologiju Makedonije i Stare Srbije*”, 1906; Василевич, J. X: “*Јужна Стара Србија*”, I, p. 483.

¹⁰⁰² Djordjevic, Vladan: “*Die Albanensen und die Grossmächte*”, Leipzig, 1913.

with the ambassadors of Russia, France and Austria-Hungary requested that he become the Prince of an autonomous Mirdita.¹⁰⁰³

Although Paris and Vienna did not support this idea, as according to Austria-Hungary it narrowed the Albanian issue beyond the goals for an ethnic Albania, i.e. with its entirety beyond the internal religious lines, in accordance with its own interests, so that it should represent a dam against pan-Slavism in the Balkans, Russia supported it, provided that Preng Bibë Doda linked a military alliance with Cetina and use his Mirditors attacked to attack the Ottoman armies, which were engaged in war on the Montenegrin border.¹⁰⁰⁴

This action was not received well by the rest of the Albanians who knew where it could all lead to, an issue that, evidently, will be taken into account by the great European powers, with the exception of Russia, which did not opt for an autonomy of Mirdita to be established at the Treaty of London. Although in the London package Albanians were excluded from the principle of the right to autonomy on the grounds that they had not yet been recognized as a separate nation, as the Ottoman Empire still treated them within the Ottoman-Millet, nevertheless, the Budapest Agreement marked the first international diplomatic act consenting to the idea of an Albanian state outside the concepts of autonomous feudal lords such as that of Mirdita, mentioned in the Berlin Congress, though rejected by Austria-Hungary and Great Britain on the same grounds.¹⁰⁰⁵

Despite these developments, the Ottoman package of London, with or without a constitution, provided, among other things, full supervision of Europeans over reforms, bringing it under the control of the great European powers. The Sultan accepted the program, but not the loss of his independence through an intervention of the great powers.

This gave “cause” to Russia, which was rather interested on a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the great European powers, working tirelessly from within (through the continued use of the Slav-Orthodox) to make it fail so to get into a war. On April 24, 1877, she declared war on the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁰⁶

Initially the Russian-Ottoman war did not show to have suited the attackers, as the Russian forces, not only failed to take Plevna, but began to suffer further losses in many parts by the Ottoman army commanded by General Osman Pasha. In order not to lose the war, the Russians were aided by the Romanian army of Prince Karl, who was put in charge of the Russian-Romanian army. After several months of fighting, in December, Ottoman troops in Plevne capitulated, although this had not been foreseen by European military observers.

It turned out that after this defeat, the Ottoman army seemed not to be interested in any other resistance. It allowed Russian and Romanian troops to penetrate strategically freely, crossing the Balkan Mountains, taking Adrianople and reaching Marmara in January. It seemed that behind this action stood the Sultan trying to provoke a military intervention by Western powers against Russia, similar to that of the Crimean War of 1865. As this did not happen, to prevent complete disaster, the sultan decided to enter into peace talks with the Russians in the town of San Stefano.¹⁰⁰⁷

However, the Russian-Ottoman war had a major impact on the Christian peoples of the Balkans. Russia’s allies, lined up on its side, rightly expected to enjoy the fruits of this alliance.

Of course, this war, with the exception of the isolated case of Kapedan of Mirdita and his alignment with the Russians, confronted Christian Albanians and Greeks with the challenge of joining the Russian sphere of influence and the Slav-Orthodox hegemonic concept, which excluded them from the European sphere. If they joined. Slavic-Orthodox, which excluded them from the European one. Whereas, if they were determined to protect their territories from

¹⁰⁰³ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, faqe 136.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Idem, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰⁵ For more see: Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, pp. 143-149.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Sumner, B.H: “*Russia and the Balkans*”, 1870-1880”, Oxford, 1937, p. 177.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Medlicott, W.M: “*A diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement, 1878-1880*”, London, 1938, p. 39.

Slavic-Orthodox invasions, as demanded by most Albanians of the Islamic faith, it turned them into “defenders” of the Ottoman Empire, thus turning them, in case of defeat, as prey in the hands of the victors.

This dilemma for Orthodox Albanians and Greeks became even greater when Russia, on April 24, 1877, issued a proclamation the Russian Tsar by inviting all Christian nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula to seize weapons alongside the Russian armies, as for them, it said, the day had already come for liberation from Ottoman oppression.¹⁰⁰⁸

As standing by was doubly burdensome, the idea of a liberation uprising had begun to gain weight among Albanian patriotic circles, as the Ottoman Empire was unable to protect Albanian territories from Slavic invaders. Thus, in May 1877, an Albanian Committee was formed in Janina tasked to implement the idea of a liberation uprising. At its head was Abdyl Frashëri, who had also been a member of Parliament for Janina in the first Ottoman Parliament elected at the time. This Committee, although called Albanian, was of a vilayet character, that of Janina, which included representatives of all parts of the vilayet: Mehmed Ali Vrioni (Berat), Mustafa Nuri Vlora (Vlora), Sulejman Tahiri (Tepelena), Vesel Dino (Preveza) and others, and was not beyond reasonable doubt that it was not even outside the interest of the Ottoman Empire, interested in mobilizing the Albanian factor on the border with Greece to fight against Russia and its Slav allies (Serbs and Montenegrins), who had already declared themselves against the Greeks, whom the Tsar of Russia had openly replaced with the Slav-Orthodox factor, especially with the Bulgarian one.

That this was an interaction to protect against the Slavo-Russian-Orthodox invasions in these parts, equally threatening the interests of both Albanians and Greeks, which would suit the Ottoman Empire, thus enjoying the backing of European anti-Russian powers, it will be confirmed by Abdyl Frashëri as well. A few months later he wrote that “Europe would be convinced that only a Greek dam could protect its civilization in the Balkan Peninsula from the Russian threat, but along with it, an Albanian dam too.”¹⁰⁰⁹

As will be seen shortly, this would be a mistake not only for Abdyl and the Janina Committee, but also for those Ottoman imperial circles, thinking that an Albanian-Greek alliance would help prevent what will appear a little later at the San Stefano Peace.

In fact, at the time, the alliance of Albanians and Greeks was also sought by Hellenistic nationalist circles, which were terrified that Russia, interested in Greater Bulgaria, could include Thrace and Macedonia on its future borders. Therefore, a Greece with one million inhabitants, which was unable to take any military action, found it appropriate to do so by involving Albanians in the war, which the Janina Committee’s proposal for an Albanian-Greek alliance found positive expectations in Athens government circles. The Greek government agreed to enter into talks with the Albanians.¹⁰¹⁰

The talks were held “secretly”¹⁰¹¹ in Janina during the second half of July 1877 between Abdyl Frashëri, accompanied by Mehmed Ali Vrioni, and Epaminonda Mavromatis, an official of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰¹²

It was clear from the outset that the meeting was bound to failure, since the parties had highly conflicting views. Abdyl Frashëri outlined the common interests against the Pan-Slavic invasions, demanded that a military alliance be established between the parties in advance, provided that the Albanians rise up against the Ottoman Empire whereas Albania’s independence would be declared. This meant that Athens should declare war on the Ottoman

¹⁰⁰⁸ Sumner, B.H: “*Russia and the Balkans*”, 1870-1880”, Oxford, 1937, p. 177.

¹⁰⁰⁹ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 140.

¹⁰¹⁰ Idem, p. 141.

¹⁰¹¹ Documents from the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry indicate that the Ottoman Empire was aware of these talks, which pretended to know nothing, but that Abdyl Frashëri had previously consulted with senior Ottoman officials about the “resistance front against Russia”. (Note of the German Embassy in Istanbul, No. 38/48, dated 2 August 1877, archived in the box: Türkei, 143.)

¹⁰¹² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 141.

Empire and recognize the independent Albanian principality, which would be in line with Albania's ethnic borders, including Kosovo in the north, as far as Vranje, and Chameria in the south, as far as Preveza. As recompense Albanians, in their turn, would help the Greek army conquer Thessaly and Macedonia without any difficulty, as most of the officers serving in the Ottoman garrisons there were Albanians and would hand over the towns without war by order of the Janina Committee.¹⁰¹³

Although no commendable source of the time, at least from the well-informed ones of German, Austrian, Ottoman, or Russian diplomats from Istanbul or Athens mentions any demand for the proclamation of the "Albanian province" that would be recognized by Athens, however, German and Austrian sources from Istanbul outlay the demands of the Greek side which are: broad participation of Albanians in the war against the Ottoman forces, backed "Epirote volunteers", and possibility of Greece positively considering the request that the uprising be of Albanian character only beyond the Seman River, provided that these areas also seek unification with Greece in order to form an Albanian province under sovereignty of the king of Greece.¹⁰¹⁴

These sources, however, claim that Athens, after measuring the pulse of the Southern Albanians, who sought the protection of their territories in accordance with their interests, leaning on favor of an Albanian autonomy within the ethnic extension and within the composition of the Ottoman Empire, formed the so-called "Epirus Committee" in Corfu made up of immigrants and mercenaries, and some Albanians of the Orthodox faith, who sought the unification of the Vilayet of Janina with the Greek Kingdom. The "Epirus Committee", led by Athens, began to act from the beginning of August of that year towards organizing a supposedly Albanian uprising, but with philo-Greek goals.¹⁰¹⁵

The activity of the "*Epirus Committee*" completely devalued the work of the Committee of Janina, though it could not stop further contacts of the Albanians with the Greeks about possible alliances. Several similar meetings were held in Istanbul, at the level of "parliamentarians" of the two countries, Abdyl Frashëri, elected MP in the autumn elections of 1877, met Stefanos Skuludhos, Member of the Greek Parliament. Abdyl Frashëri, as a Member of Parliament, also represented the Istanbul Committee under the name "*Central Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Albanian Nation*", or as it was called the "*Istanbul Committee*", established in December 1877, chaired by Abdyl.¹⁰¹⁶

These talks did not bring anything new, except that the relations of the Albanians towards Greece was tested as well as the well-known Greek actions underway a little later against the Albanian lands.

Since the beginning of January 1878 the situation was reversed on the battlefield to the detriment of the Ottomans and to the benefit of the Russians, ending with the defeat of the Ottomans. Upon this military decline of the Ottoman forces, which began fleeing in all directions, the event will be used by the Serbian army to march towards the Kosovo vilayet.

On the occasion, they took Pirot, Nish, Kursumlija, Prokuplje and Vranje and in early January reached Gjilan, while the Montenegrin armies conquered Tivar in January and shortly after Ulqin and came out on the shores of Lake Shkodra and the river Buna. As many of the ominous predictions about the occupation of Albanian lands by Russian allies, who were close to Istanbul, were being fulfilled, the Istanbul Committee changed strategy. It replaced the plans for declaring a liberation war by those of protecting Albanian territories from the threat of further fragmentation of Albania. In this case, they saw the Ottoman Empire as the only protector and guarantor of the Albanian being, so they sided with it.

¹⁰¹³ Idem, p. 142.

¹⁰¹⁴ Documents of the Political Archive of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn, Türkei, Box 143, doc. no, 137-41.

¹⁰¹⁵ Idem, doc 147/43,44.

¹⁰¹⁶ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 142.

This determination was further strengthened by the Peace of San Stefano, signed on March 3, 1878, from which the famous Treaty of Peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire emerged.

The Treaty of San Stefano seceded from the Ottoman Empire about 80 percent of its territory in the Balkan Peninsula. Tsarist Russia would secure its hegemonic goals in Southeast Europe mainly through the large autonomous Bulgaria created by this treaty. Bulgaria appeared as an autonomous principality with its government, a tributary to the Sultan. Its borders would include the vast majority of lands belonging to the Ottoman Empire. It would extend east to the Black Sea, south to the Aegean Sea, north to the Danube, and west to the Voskopoja Mountains. The rest of the imperial territories would be granted to Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, which were turning from autonomous principalities to independent states.¹⁰¹⁷

Thus, almost half of the Albanian lands were given to the Balkan Slavic states. Bulgaria, among others, won the Albanian provinces of Korça, Blinisht, Pogradec, Struga, Dibra, Kërçova, Gostivar, Tetova, Shkupi, and Kaçanik. Serbia, extending mainly southwest, would also annex the northern and northeastern parts of Kosova, as far as Mitrovica. Montenegro, whose area would increase by more than three times, would also include within its borders a range of Albanian provinces, such as Ulqin, Kraja, Anamali, Hoti, Gruda, Tuzi, Kelmendi, Plava and Gucia, and Rugova.¹⁰¹⁸

ALBANIAN LEAGUE OF PRIZREN

The San Stefano peace and realities it created, touching mostly Albanians and their interests, made them think of a joint action of all Albanian forces, despite the convictions and attitudes they had about the future of the Ottoman Empire, in order to finally become a factor both in relation to the Ottoman Empire and against the decision-making international factor. For the first time amidst that disaster, Albanians faced useful circumstances for action, as dissatisfied with San Stefano, besides the Ottomans, were also the great European powers, without exception, which although saw the Russian-Ottoman war with much indifference, will quickly reject its achievements along with the agreements demanding that they be dropped altogether.

Under the circumstances, in addition to the momentum of the protest movement against the Treaty of San Stefano, there was also the idea of an armed opposition against the decisions that could be taken at the Berlin Congress to the detriment of the territorial integrity of the homeland. The demand to form an overall alliance became quite popular due to the fact that it was in line with the positions of the Ottoman Empire, interested on the next European Congress, which would be held in Berlin, to use it as much as possible to repair the damage of war and peace with the Russians. But, this time with the intervention of the Great European Powers, which at the same time, as opponents of Russia and its plans, appeared as its defenders. This situation, therefore, had to be exploited by all means and to a greater extent. Therefore, any protest and program, whether military with the motto of defending the “*vatan*”, as it appeared to the Albanians, whereby the meaning of “*vatan*” was viewed both as homeland and ethnicity, as was the case with defense of the four Albanian vilayets, was

¹⁰¹⁷ For more on the decisions of the peace of San Stefano see: Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, p. 95.

¹⁰¹⁸ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 148.

identified with the general one, which suited the Ottoman Empire. For the first time, nationalism and Ottomanism went hand in hand, which was motivating.

The patriotic dichotomy, however, carried several filters inside, through which various demands were conveyed, which, looking at the political plan, were often inconsistent with each other, as for many Albanians the protection of the Empire meant protecting Albanian lands from further fragmentation. This also meant a way of justifying them in one form or another, which meant that the so-called Ottoman patriotism or for many even Islam, had to include *patriotism for fatherland*, which according to Sami Frashëri, was nothing but an expression of *national identity* in the imperial circumstances, which also appeared to be a stimulus for the common (homeland) related to the idea of ethnicity as autonomy within the common imperial identity.¹⁰¹⁹

In the circumstances, the circles of Albanian patriots, represented generally by the Istanbul Committee, which had switched from one protecting the rights of Albanians to one of new attributes of national defense, was dominated by radical currents. It aimed to establish an Albanian alliance, which was to mobilize the country's population on behalf of Albania's national rights leading it into the struggle for the preservation of the country's territorial integrity. It also stood for the creation of an autonomous Albanian vilayet, or, if international circumstances allowed, an autonomous Albanian state,¹⁰²⁰ which could also be called Ottoman Albania. According to the proponents of this current, the Albanian alliance had to be prepared to fight, in accordance with the circumstances created, not only against the neighboring chauvinist states, but also against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰²¹

There was another group or a second current in the national movement, that of *the moderates*, as they were called, represented by well-known patriotic personalities, such as Ali Bey Guçia, Ilijaz Pasha Dibra, Abedin Pasha Dino, Mahmud Pasha Biçoku, Omer Pasha Vrioni and others, who, like the radicals, demanded that the alliance be national in nature. They accepted in principle the idea of a united autonomous Albanian vilayet, endowed with an administrative and cultural autonomy, but not as a link leading to an Albanian seceding state. They were not inclined to go against the Sublime Porte hoping an Albanian vilayet could be created with the consent of the Sultan, whom they believed they could persuade, since, according to them, the creation of this vilayet was in the of the Ottoman Empire itself.¹⁰²²

Among the radicals and the moderates, there was yet another current, that of the *Sultanists*, which included Turkoman officials and senior officials of the vilayet administration, from local feudal elements and the Turkoman clergy, who identified with the ruling imperial circles, completely siding with the political line of the Sublime Porte and serving it. They would join the movement under the Sultanate's direct directives demanding that the bond of resistance be called the *Islamic League*.¹⁰²³

¹⁰¹⁹ For more on this see: Gawrych, Giorge: "Gjysmëhëna dhe Shqiponja – Sundimi Otoman, Islamizmi dhe Shqiptarizmi" ("The Crescent and the Eagle - Ottoman Rule, Islamism and Albanianism"), Tiranë, 2007, pp. 11-17

¹⁰²⁰ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 150.

¹⁰²¹ Idem, p. 150.

¹⁰²² Idem, p. 150.

¹⁰²³ Idem, p. 151.

In addition, the *Sultanists* did not accept in principle the idea of an Albanian vilayet, as according to them, it would separate Muslim Albanians from the Muslim “brothers” of the Balkan Peninsula and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰²⁴

It was, therefore, a current founded by Sultan Hamid and his “unifying” idea for all Muslims, to be promoted precisely in the Balkans and precisely among the Albanians, who according to him represented the “flower of Islam”,¹⁰²⁵ who had to stay to preserve the caliphate root in the European part, a movement kept alive all the time with its influence, at least formally, appearing on the *Kararname* of the Albanian League of Prizren under Item Two to remain included also among the fourteen known points of Hasan Prishtina of August 1912.

In order to avoid divisions on these grounds, which would be detrimental, the Istanbul Committee decided to make efforts to call for an Albanian alliance under the motto of opposing the Treaty of San Stefano. It proclaimed that it was ready to prevent its implementation by war fought with the slogan of protecting the homeland from fragmentation, with everyone participating indiscriminately. This was a great achievement internally, as the first ever mouthpiece of an open manifestation of Albanianism with Ottomanism as a new value emerging and gaining social, political and cultural legitimacy, dominating the future relations of the Albanians with the Ottoman Empire for the next thirty-four years until its curtain fell in the Balkans. It was also a message sent to the Congress of Berlin, which was to be held soon, making it rather clear that the starting point would be the annulment of the Treaty of San Stefano. In this spirit were also some statements of the leaders of the Istanbul Committee in the European media addressed to the European public but also to the great powers, such as that of Abdyl Frashëri in “*Messenger de Vienne*”. Frashëri argued for the political rights of the Albanian people on the grounds that they wanted nothing more than to live in freedom, get out of backwardness and take their rightful place among the civilized nations of Europe.

As time approached and an organizational form had to be drawn before the Berlin Congress, in order for the Great European Powers to be told what the Albanians were really looking for and what their political positions were, the Istanbul Committee, in “complete secrecy”,¹⁰²⁶ ostensibly in order not to provoke an open reaction from the governing bodies, it

¹⁰²⁴ Idem, p. 151.

¹⁰²⁵ For more see: Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Nga Shqipëria Osmane te Shqipëria Europiane*” (“*From Ottoman Albania to European Albania*”), Prishtinë, 2010.

¹⁰²⁶ Many Albanian historians, including the compilers of the “History of the Albanian people” (“*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”), Second Volume, Tirana 2002, p. 153, constantly emphasize that the League was held “in complete secrecy”, so as “not to provoke the reactions of the Ottoman rulers”. This attitude is not argued and is beyond the logic of events. Because, the Ottoman Empire was very interested in a reaction of the Albanians. Numerous sources say that the Ottoman Empire had sent special envoys to the Vilayet of Kosovo and Shkodra to hold protest rallies against the Peace of San Stefano - in Prishtina, Shkup, Shkodra, and other cities. The Vali (Governor) of Kosova and the Governor of Shkodra had held regular meetings with the country's leadership and had called for the establishment of resistance committees, in which case the volunteers who would choose to defend the Albanian territories were publicly registered. The European press, especially the German one, notes these forms of manifestation and links them to the Ottoman authorities, since in those circumstances the Albanians and the Sublime Porte shared the same interest: the protection of the Ottoman territories from fragmentation. There are many authors, among them Roland, Bartl: “*Die Albanische Muslime zur Zeit der nationalen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung 1878-1912*”, Wisbaden, 1968; Schanderl, Hans Diter: “*Die Albanienpolitik Österreich-Ungarns und Italien 1877-1902*”, 1950; Gopcevic, Spiridon: “*Oberalbanien und seine Liga*”, Leipzig, 1881; Ippen, Theodor: “*Beitrage zur innere Geschichte Albanien im XIX Jahrhundert*”, published at “*Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*”, band, 1, München-Leipzig, 1916; Stavri Skëndo “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2002; George Gawrych “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiptarja*”, Tiranë, 2007; Jozef von Hamer “*Istorija Otomanskog Carstva*”, Zagreb, 1968, etc., assessing that the Istanbul Committee was in constant contact with the Sublime Porte about the form of organization of the Albanian reaction and even of the Albanian League of Prizren,

took the decision to convene the Assembly of the League. This does not coincide with reality, because it was precisely the demonstrative side what the Albanians and the Ottoman Empire needed. Though, as mentioned above, the great European powers without distinction, were interested, each in its own way to use this opportunity for their own accounts. This is clearly evidenced by the interest of the Sublime Porte for an organized response of Albanians when at the end of May, in Istanbul, to summon into a meeting the most famous personalities of political life: Iliaz Pasha Dibra, Ali Bey Guçia, Ymer Prizreni, Ahmet Korenica, Zija Prishtina, Mustafa Pasha Vlora, Sheh Mustafë Tetova, Vejsel Bey Dino, and several dozen others, including Abdyl Frashëri, Mehmed Ali Vrioni, as a representative of the Istanbul Committee and members of the Ottoman parliament. German sources indicate that “The Sublime Porte and the Albanian representatives, titulars in the vilayet of Kosovo and that of Shkodra, will come to an agreement for a strong response of the endangered lands.”¹⁰²⁷

Therefore, it is not by chance that Prizren was designated as a place. The Vilayet of Kosovo, being directly affected by the Serbo-Montenegrin fragmentation, had long been the center of large protests of all the layers: from the feudal, moderate and clerical ones acting on patriotic slogan “defending the homeland”, meaning protecting the homeland and protecting the Empire at the same time.

A special Commission was charged for direct organization of actions for the convening of the Assembly, most of whose members were from Prizren and Gjakova. Among them were Ymer Prizreni and Ahmet Korenica, and one of the most prominent representatives of the patriotic circles, Ali Bey Guçia (later Ali Pasha Guçia), a local feudal lord and great opponent of Tanzimat, issued the call for a meeting of the Assembly at the end of April.

The Assembly of the League convened on June 10, 1878 in Prizren, in the Mehmed Pasha Madrasa, near the Bajrak-Mosque. The date chosen for the meeting was not accidental, as it had to be held before the Berlin Congress, which was scheduled for June 13. From the few data existing, as only a part of the actual collection protocols has been preserved, one learns that more than one hundred representatives of many Albanian provinces attended the Assembly, though not the delegates of the vilayet of Shkodra (whose attendance had been hindered by the intrigues of the Turkish Vali Hysen Pasha, though one should look deeper for the true reasons), while only Abdyl Frashëri from the Vilayet of Janina attended. However, of these 110 names found coming mostly from the Vilayet of Kosova, they are mainly personalities former members of the uprisings against Tanzimat, among whom the most prominent ones were Ali Bey Guçia, Iliaz Pasha Dibra, Hasan Pasha Tetova, Ymer Prizreni (President of the Organizing Commission of the Assembly), Abdullah Pasha Dreni, Ahmet Korenica, Shaban Bey Prizreni, Jashar Bey Shkupi, Shaban Bey Peja, Filip Doda, Sulejman

the conduct of which was not only not “secret” but an open manifestation, which, by the Muslim clergy, was widely propagated throughout. This atmosphere is also reflected in many reports of German, Austrian, and French consuls from Shkodra, Prizren, and Shkup, archived in the Political Archive of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in boxes under Türkei, 143 and 124, including also some of the press reports of the time about the events. Attributing “clandestine” spirit of the Albanian League of Prizren together with the “revolutionary” spirit, which it did not have, as well as other events that will follow the Albanian National Revival until the national independence of 1912, however, has to do with ideological clichés and folkloric pathos, which have burdened the Albanian historiography (the one created in Albania during the communist regime, but partly also in Kosovo, which has been under its influence), a spirit that, as seen from “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, “rewritten” in 2002, even today continues to suffer from these same stereotypes.

¹⁰²⁷ See the telegram of the German ambassador from Istanbul no. 1276 from box Türkei 143, dated 2 June 1878 to Bismarck, as a highly credible depot, detailing the meeting of Sublime Porte officials with representatives of Albanians from the Vilayet of Kosova as well as the leaders of the Istanbul Committee, which is said to have been established with the permission of the Sublime Porte as a Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Albanians.

Vokshi, Shuajip Spahiu, Ali Ibra, and others. The meeting was attended by several Bosniak feudal lords and *sultanists* from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Turkish mytesarif of Prizren, Qamil Bey, also took part, together with some supporters of the sultanist line, who, based on the reports of the consuls present in Prizren, was very active. This completely refutes the claims that the League was kept “secret” and without the knowledge of the Porte.

Based on numerous sources of many deficiencies, however, it is understood that Iliaz Pasha Dibra was elected Speaker of the Assembly, while Abdyl Frashëri spoke there, neither in the capacity of “President” nor “Presiding” of the League, as noted by a fair number of Albanian historians, but as a representative of the Istanbul Committee, although some sources refute his participation in the Assembly altogether.¹⁰²⁸

Even from what is left of Abdyl Frashëri’s speech, being that “the purpose of the Assembly was to wait and cut off the heartless enemies, by binding the Albanian faith and by swearing to bloodily defend the lands that our grandparents and great-grandparents left us”,¹⁰²⁹ it is more of a patriotic call than a political program. The patriotic atmosphere, outside any political program, is announced according to the sources of foreign consuls from the Assembly, whereby this atmosphere was manifested regardless of which “wing” it came from.¹⁰³⁰

More importantly, however, is the fact that the Assembly managed to reach a decision to establish an organization of a political and military nature, of a League (*Ittifak*), with a single governing center and branches in all the provinces of the country tasked with defending by all means the interests of the country. According to tradition, together with the formation of the League, a general pledge (*besa*) was announced, according to which all blood feuds between the inhabitants of the provinces included in the Assembly of Prizren should be stopped immediately.¹⁰³¹

The Assembly also established supreme bodies. At the head of the League was the General Council based in Prizren, on which the provincial branches would depend. Iliaz Pasha Dibra was elected its chairman. The Central Committee of the League was formed, consisting of three commissions: the Foreign Affairs Commission headed by Abdyl Frashëri, Internal Affairs Commission headed by Haxhi Shabani and the Financial Revenue Commission headed by Suljeman Vokshi.¹⁰³²

The first acts of the General Assembly were: a petition on the Albanian issue, sent to the Congress of Berlin, and a petition sent to the Sublime Porte,¹⁰³³ *Kararname (Decisions-Kanun Act) and Talimat (Decrees)*.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰²⁸ See: Krasniqi, Rexhep dr: “*Die Albanische Liga*”, Vienna, 1934, a doctoral thesis at the University of Vienna, deposited in the Munich library “Südost Institut”; Ippen, Theodor: “*Beitrage zur innere Geschichte Albaniens im XIX Jahrhundert*”, published in “*Ilyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*”, band. I, München-Lepizig, 1916.

¹⁰²⁹ Belegu, Xhafer: “*Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit dhe veprimtaria e saj 1878-1881*”, Tiranë, 1939, p. 20.

¹⁰³⁰ See: Reports of the German Embassy from Istanbul to the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry, Bon, box Türkei, band 143, reports 26-31 June 1878, addressed to Berlin based on the information that the Embassy possessed in Prizren during the holding of the Assembly.

¹⁰³¹ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 155.

¹⁰³² Idem, p. 156.

¹⁰³³ The petition, which is said to have been sent to the Sublime Porte (See: “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 156), with the request to unite all Albanian lands in a single Albanian vilayet, in a united vilayet (Tevhidi vilayet) with a “united assembly” headed by a joint administration, budget, and separate army, thus provided with administrative and cultural autonomy, in fact, is not found in any document of the Assembly of the League. It could be a petition that the Istanbul Committee addressed to the representatives of the Great Powers in Istanbul, but without referring to the Assembly of Prizren. This is also in the archived documents of the Political Archive of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the framework of petitions and letters addressed to the Congress and their representatives, in the Türkei box, 143.

The *Kararname* (*Basic Act*) consisted of sixteen items, sanctioning the formation of the League as a political organization (Item 16) and define its most pressing tasks. Item 1 emphasized the protective character against any government, except that of the Sublime Porte, to act actively by all means to protect the integrity of the country.¹⁰³⁵ Article 4 stipulated that, “by the clean laws of Shari’ah, we will protect the life, property and honor of the faithful companions of the non-Muslim faith, as well as for ourselves”¹⁰³⁶ a clear indication of preserving the Islamic character, which as a formulation under the circumstances was inevitable.

In fact, the national spirit of which it was deprived on June 10, the day of the opening of the Assembly and especially the disapproval of demands for the unification of the four Albanian vilayets into one, which was a form of autonomy, providing protection against threat of further fragmentation from all sides, made the League sentient it as early as the General Assembly, in Prizren, on July 1, 1878.

Completed with 96 delegates from Kosova and delegates from Shkodra (26) and the Vilayet of Janina (20), following extensive discussion, the Assembly approved a Resolution or the new Kanun for the League of Prizren, making important steps in the further elaboration of the League program. The new Kanun openly declared the organization established in Prizren as the *Albanian League* calling its central body the *National Committee*.¹⁰³⁷

The new statute had been cleared of any formulation of an Islamic religious character and of the idea of allegiance to the Ottoman Empire, which had been included in *Kararname*.¹⁰³⁸ The text of the Kanun explicitly stated that the League would fight for Albanian national rights extending its activity limited only to Albanian lands. It gave the National Committee the right to form subcommittees of the League in the centers of the sanjaks of Albania, to organize an army to defend the Albanian lands, declaring general military mobilization of all men capable of using weapons, to gather, for the needs of budget

¹⁰³⁴ Idem, p. 156.

¹⁰³⁵ See: “*Kararname*”, published as a document in its entirety in “*Akte të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare 1878-1912*” (“*Acts of the Albanian National Renaissance 1878-1912*”), prepared by Stefanq Pollo and Selami Pulaha, Tiranë, 1878, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰³⁶ Idem, p. 41.

¹⁰³⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 160.

¹⁰³⁸ The review “*Tercüman-i Şark*” (Orient Interpreter) published the *Kararname* approved by the Assembly of the League on July 1, 1878 on the following seven points: 1) To preserve the sovereignty of His Majesty the Padishah (Sultan) over Albania and not yield to the neighboring peoples a centimeter of Albanian territories. 2) To institutionalize (create) a vilayet called “Vilayet of Albania”, which will consist of the vilayets of Kosova, Shkodra, and Janina. To appoint as governor of this vilayet a person who is educated, capable, and honest, and who knows well the situation, the needs of the country and the customs and traditions of the population. 3) To appoint in the administration and judiciary of this vilayet officials who have a good knowledge of the language of the country, to the point of understanding the requests of people in need and be able to communicate with them without an interpreter. 4) The local population should have the right to be elected equally, regardless of religious or class differences, in the district councils (regions). In the same way the councils of the Kazas should be elected, which, in turn, should be elected by the councils of the Sandzak. As for the Grand Council of the Vilayet, it will be elected by the Sandzak Councils. 5) To institutionalize (create) a council consisting of elected members who will meet every two months in the main city of the vilayet. This council will inform the Grand Vilayet Council of what the population needs for its subsistence, the reforms that need to be carried out, as well as the mistakes and (complaints) of the employees. This council will appoint its representative as the General Prosecutor, who in cooperation with other necessary employees, will do justice. In short, this council will act as a tribunal before the Grand Council. 6) The Ottoman language will remain the official language in the correspondence between the Vilayet and the Sublime Porte. However, the councils of the judiciary should use the Albanian language when adjudicating cases within their competence. In the high schools that currently exist in Albania, as in those that will be formed later, together with the studies of the Ottoman language, science and arts, subjects for teaching Albanian literacy should be introduced. Part of the income of the Vilayet should be allocated for the development and advancement of education, which will make the country emerge from the ignorance in which it finds itself. 7) Organize a national army class, regardless of religious differences. This army, which will surely number 200,000 men in its ranks, will be trained in accordance with its special organizational rules. The state will appoint officers as instructors who will train the soldiers.”

itself, a series of different taxes and pass criminal penalties against deserters from the Albanian League. This meant that the League had created the conditions for attaining the functions of a government.¹⁰³⁹

The Kanun, adopted on July 2, 1878, marks an important victory of the Albanian National Movement within the League of Prizren. Indeed, with the rights envisaged, sanctioned in the Kanun of July 2, 1878, the Albanian League of Prizren gained a legal basis to gradually establish an autonomous Albanian state within the Ottoman imperial state.¹⁰⁴⁰

THE BERLIN CONGRESS 1878

For the peoples of Europe, the Congress of Berlin of 1878 marks a great historic event that defined the political landscape for many decades. Its course and decisions will affect not only the social realities of the time, but also the historical ones in general, taking a turn of crises continuing in various ways follow what it is called geostrategy and geopolitics. “Obviously, the reason for such a development was, on the one hand, the ongoing decline of the Ottoman Empire, on the brink of its inevitable collapse, and on the other hand the birth of new powers, Germany and Italy, providing for a continued international balance.”¹⁰⁴¹

This equilibrium fell through after Russia reached a victory over Turkey in 1877 and the parties hastily signed the Treaty of San Stefano, in March 17, whereby Russia, through the creation of the state of Bulgaria was gaining access to the most sensitive part of the Balkans with an outlet to the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁴²

It was rather clear that San Stefano’s Greater Bulgaria represented nothing but a right-hand man from Russia, thus realizing the long-held dream of deep penetration in the Balkans and hegemony in this neuralgic part of Europe, right there where historically the match between West and East took place and in a way the keys to world geostrategy were held.

San Stefano’s peace with what it brought rightly shook all of the European powers, which could not but concentrate on the realities it engendered to the political and diplomatic plane. Thus, England, which had penetrated deep into the Middle East and was still looking for new routes beyond India, with such peace as that of San Stefano, compelled by the Russians, saw its greater threat.¹⁰⁴³ Austria-Hungary and Italy, especially the former, with the creation of the great Bulgarian state in the Balkans, feared that Russia, with its pan-Slavicism, after such a treaty was closing its doors to the rest in this part of Europe.¹⁰⁴⁴

In addition to the majority of the peoples of the Balkans dissatisfied with the Treaty of San Stefano, the Great Powers, led by England, stood against its decisions. In fact, it seemed that if Russia continued to insist that the peace of San Stefano was its last say, then there was nothing left but an inevitable war between England and Russia, in which others would be

¹⁰³⁹ See: *Talimat Decree of the League*, approved for the organization of its administration and army at “*Akte të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare 1878-1912*”, prepared by Stefanaq Pollo and Selami Pulaha, Tiranë, 1978, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴⁰ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 161.

¹⁰⁴¹ Otmar, Karl: “*Bismarcks Aussenpolitik und der Berliner Kongres*”, Wiesbaden, 1978, p. 7

¹⁰⁴² Knap, Verner: “*Der Berliner Kongres*”, Wiesbaden, 1978, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴³ Idem, p. 15.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Otmar, Karl; Bismarcks...”, p. 19.

involved.¹⁰⁴⁵ An urgent need for an international meeting was raised, where the great powers would talk openly about all issues, before the weapons did. In this regard, Germany was more committed and almost took all the mediation, whether to reduce the tensions that arose, or to prepare for a major congress, where in addition to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, England and Austria-Hungary, Italy and France would also be attending with representatives of peoples who were fighting for national independence, but who would not be there to decide and see how the great powers would decide. Bismarck, who had done so much for the unity and prosperity of the new German state, was already faced with an extremely difficult task, to reconcile as much as possible all the contradictions and bursting conflicts between the great powers and to undermine as much as possible the decisions of San Stefano to keep Russia as further away from Europe as possible, though achieving it in that way so as to avoid concerns or war between the superpowers.¹⁰⁴⁶

But how could something be achieved metaphorically “grilling the perfect steak”, as the situation after the accords of San Stefano was so high and tough at the same time that it often seemed that such a goal was unattainable. Bismarck himself, who took on the role of agile mediator and was nicknamed an *honest broker* (*ehrlicher Makler*) explained: “The Germans had no direct interest in the Balkans or beyond, at a time when we still had internal problems, yet we were worried about what was happening around us and could have an impact on us. Russia was deeply involved in the Balkans, and this caused Austria-Hungary to protest several times and began to urge Britain to form an alliance against the Russians. Italy, too, eavesdropping on what was happening and ready to start a war, was worried. France, though a bit shocked by the recent events, nevertheless showed concern on what was happening and did not agree with the new situation to make one-sided favors for Russia. So it was very clear that the Great Powers could clash with each other, and this, inadvertently, would also involve Germany, which was not interested in getting into any conflict. Therefore, who but us should take on the role of a conciliator? We were the only ones who had no hand in the Balkans and the Middle East. So it was up to us to prepare for such a meeting, where for the first time it would be discussed not to have a conflict between the Great Powers.”¹⁰⁴⁷

As such, according to most scholars of the time, Germany was indeed the most suitable state for such mediation, while Bismarck was the most energetic politician who would mediate between the electrified parties.¹⁰⁴⁸

Of course, it was not easy to take on such a role, because, as Emil Ludvig, one of the best researchers on Bismarck and the Berlin Congress, puts it, “The circumstances at the time were such that they required a strong personality to bring Russia to its knees diplomatically and set the balance of power again to suit again those standing against Russia, all of which had to be done through fine diplomacy. Only Bismarck could do that.”¹⁰⁴⁹

¹⁰⁴⁵ Gothusen, Klaus-Detlev: “*Die Oreintalische Frage als Problem der europeische Geschichte*”, “Südosteuropa Mitteilungen”, No. 4-78, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Otmar, Karl: „Bismacks...“, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ludvig, Emil: “*Bismarck*“, published by “*Wilhelm Goldman Verlag*“, 1926, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴⁸ In June 1978, the international symposium “*The Berlin Congress and the Eastern Crisis*” was held in Mainz, Germany. The scientific gathering was attended by over 60 scientists from Europe and Asia, who rated Bismarck’s Germany as the most suitable country for such a meeting. Russia, at that time, after the victory over the Ottoman Empire, agreed to come to Berlin thinking that Germany, even if it was not on its side, was not against it. This attitude was pointed out by Verner Knopp, Teodor Shider, Looar Gall, and others.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ludvig, Emil, Idem, p. 36.

The period from March 1878 to June of the same year, when the proceedings of the Berlin Congress commenced, could not have been otherwise but full of diplomatic boils, outlining the clear lines of the decisions that would follow in Congress. Bismarck was the main figure in these talks. Through diplomatic channels, he tried to match his positions before the Congress began its work.¹⁰⁵⁰

Based on the sources it appears that following the first exchanges of direct threats between Russia and England, which came immediately after the signing of the peace of San Stefano (in late March and early April) with Russia openly rejecting England's proposal to hold a new congress after San Stefano, other surrounding powers, such as Austria-Hungary and France, began to offer resolutions and proposals for overcoming the crisis brought about by San Stefano's peace. One of the most known is, for example, the Austro-Hungarian proposal of March 26, 1878, based on the Treaty of Reichstag of 1876 and the Russian-Austro-Hungarian Convention of January 15, 1877. This convention, among others, provides that after the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, independent states would be created: Bulgaria, Rumelia and Albania. According to German sources, the issue of an independent Albania, according to this agreement, is also not clarified, as two terms were used: *self-rule* and *autonomy*, as used by Andras and Goroskov.¹⁰⁵¹

So, solutions were offered, which, in fact, contradicted the decisions taken a little while ago in San Stefano, though leaving the way open to the new realities created after the Russian-Turkish War, won by Russia, which, willingly or not, could not return the situation to where it was, without getting some compensation for Russia, which would be as small and as insignificant as possible in the strategic plan.

At the same time, Russia itself, driven by the international situation, which could lead to a new alliance between England, Austria-Hungary and France against it, called it a day in favor of accepting direct talks, thus showing that it is nevertheless willing to give up San Stefano for the benefit of its further factorizing in the international sphere, as an inevitable power of the time.

Suvalov, the Russian prime minister, visited Berlin twice in a short time, where he met with Bismarck. On May 9, 1878, and May 20, Bismarck was offered the confidence of the Russian state in the organization and holding of an international congress, which would consider the issues arising after the Russian-Turkish War.¹⁰⁵²

Thus, on May 22, Suvalov met an English delegation in St. Petersburg, and this made it clear that such a congress would take place. On May 28 and 29, Austria-Hungary also announced its final proposal for resolving the eastern issue.¹⁰⁵³

The Great Powers, through numerous diplomatic channels and successive meetings, confronted an atmosphere of threat of war approximating their positions before finally

¹⁰⁵⁰See: Albers, Detlev: *Reichstag und Aussenpolitik 1871-1879*, p. 101; Gundermann, Iselin: *Berlin als Kongressstadt*, Berlin, 1878, p. 54;

¹⁰⁵¹ See: Peter Bartl: *Die Albanische Muslims zur zeit der Nationalunabhenigkeitbewegung 1878-1912* and Hans Dietrich Schanderler: *Die albanienpolitik Österreich-Ungarns und Italien 1877-1908*.

¹⁰⁵² Otmar, Karl: *Bismarcks...*, p. 10; *Die Berliner Kongress von 1878: Die Politik der Grossmächte und die Probleme der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in der zweiten Hälfte des 19 Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ralph Meville und Hans-Jürgem Schröder, Wiesbaden, 1982, p. 400.

¹⁰⁵³ According to Graf Andrash, Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, it turns out that: Bulgaria would retain only a small part of the territory assigned to San Stefano. Russia, after two years, had to leave that part of Bulgaria, whose borders would be set at the Berlin Congress, while Serbia and Montenegro would be allowed small territorial expansions. (See: *Berliner Kongres 1878*, Harald Bohland Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1978, p. 15)

throwing them on the table of the Berlin Congress, which would start shortly. For the congress itself, the final ratification of the agreements and other issues that were taken as a sideline remained, and they should not play such a big role, regardless of the importance they could have later.

The core agreement was as follows: Russia had to give up its great incursions in the Balkans through Bulgaria and efforts would be made to extend the life of the Ottoman Empire through the *status quo* in the European part, even though a conviction reigned that this represented nothing more than an attempt to gain the necessary time from all to decide how to fill the space that for five centuries had been monitored and ruled by the Bosphorus Empire.

Britain was particularly active in this regard demanding that prior to the Berlin Congress, many things become clear with Russia and Turkey, as well as with the situation in the Balkans. Thus, on May 30, after much mediation by the German side, the French side and to some extent the Italian side, the celebrated meeting between Suvalov and Lord Solsbury took place. In this historic meeting, the Russians finally accepted the positions and proposals for an adjustment of San Stefano's peace.¹⁰⁵⁴ Everything else after this meeting was formality, as the avenues of agreement were already open. The risk of confrontation between Russia and England had been overcome.¹⁰⁵⁵ It was more than clear that for the first time in such a composition Europe would consider such important issues, which would change the relations of the time.

On June 3, six representatives of the major powers: Britain, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, Italy and Germany, received invitations to the Berlin Congress, which was due to begin work on June 13.¹⁰⁵⁶

Representatives of the Balkan states (independent or autonomous) as well as representatives of the peoples fighting for independence in the Balkans and the Middle East at that time were also invited to the Congress.¹⁰⁵⁷

They came to the Congress as observers, who from time to time were allowed to enter the solemn hall of the Congress, on the occasion of putting forward written submissions, or the issuing short oral statements, as was the case with the representative of the Greek delegation, Theodoros Dilijanis, who was allowed at an intervention by French Foreign Minister William H. Haddington to submit a request for the expansion of the territories of Greater Greece for half an hour.

The Romanians were also allowed to present their demands for Transylvania at the tenth session on July 1. The same happened with the representative of Serbia as the Foreign Minister, Jovan Ristić, who was not allowed to play the role of an observer in the Congress, as Russia had requested. He and the Serbian delegation were allowed to enter the Congress hall for several minutes, only to submit written requests without justification.¹⁰⁵⁸

Representatives of the Albanian people were not invited to the Congress. This could be expected, as in the context of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims were treated as Ottoman-Millet, while Christians of both rites were treated as "Romays". This, however, did not exclude the mention of "Albania" as an ethnic group, consisting of several vilayets within the

¹⁰⁵⁴ Idem, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵⁵ See: Robert Howard Lord: "*The Congress of Berlin*", Cambridge, 1917, p. 62.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Idem, p. 17.

¹⁰⁵⁷ See: Gundermann, Iselin: "*Berlin als Kongresstadt*", Berlin 1878, p. 54.

¹⁰⁵⁸ See: Glenny, Misha: "*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*", Tiranë, pp. 141-142.

Ottoman Empire, subject to claims by neighboring countries (Serbia, Montenegro and Greece), to have parts of them included within their states. Therefore, the German historian Peter Bartl rightly concludes that the Congress failed to recognize an Albanian nationality, though recognizing their ethnicity as “Albania”. Even the representatives of the Porte at the Berlin Congress acted the same whenever the claims of Serbs, Greeks and Montenegrins against them were raised, in which case they were being denominated as “Albanian vilayets”, which were said to remain as a whole within the Ottoman Empire, though beyond any autonomous status, although this, within the framework of internal reforms, was permissible.¹⁰⁵⁹

The Congress of Berlin officially began work on June 13, 1878, and lasted until July 13 of that year, with 20 sessions.¹⁰⁶⁰ It was held at Bismarck’s official residence in central Berlin, at the Radziwill Palace. The imposing building, located behind Unter den Linden in Wilhelmstrasse, had to reflect the diplomatic and political power of the united German state, the creation of which had already begun to alter European balances. In the congressional hearing room, on the first floor, the seven delegations sat at a large horseshoe-shaped table, in alphabetical order in French. It was opened by German Chancellor Bismarck, as its Chairman, accompanied by Congress Secretary Joseph Maria von Radowitz, a skilled German diplomat who also became known for his personal notes on the work of Congress.¹⁰⁶¹

Under Bismarck’s leadership, at the negotiating table sat: the English delegation, led by Lord Solsbury; Russian delegation, headed by Suvalov and Goroskov; of the Ottoman Empire, headed by Sadulah Bey and Mehmed Ali Pasha (Majar Pasha); of Austria-Hungary, headed by Andras, and the delegations of France and Italy. The Congress was also attended by many representatives of the press of the time, observers and politicians from Germany and neighboring countries.¹⁰⁶²

Of particular interest to the public and attendees was the participation of high-ranking personalities, such as Goroskov, the Russian Prime Minister, British Prime Minister Beaconsfield, and of French Foreign Minister William Waddington.¹⁰⁶³ Contrary to this outstanding coryphaeus, the German Chancellor had only one goal related to foreign policy - maintaining a balance of power that would prevent the creation of anti-German alliances, even though the cornerstone of this strategy had already been laid with the League of Three Emperors (unofficial agreement uniting Berlin, St. Petersburg and Vienna).

The composition of the delegations and their presentation showed that the parties facing an armed conflict (England and Russia), had come to Berlin to demonstrate both political and diplomatic power. It was, therefore, rather obvious that despite the preliminary talks, taking place over the last two months, and many of the decisions already taken (in April and May), however, Berlin had turned into a diplomatic and political arena of the highest level of time.

According to the original protocols of the Berlin Congress, it turns out that at the beginning of the second session there was some friction between England and Russia. The British Prime Minister protested against the presence of the Russian fleet near Constantinople,

¹⁰⁵⁹ Bartl, Peter, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶¹ About the memories of von Radiwizt see: Gudermann, Iselin: “*Berlin als Kongressstadt*”, Berlin, 1878.

¹⁰⁶² Idem, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶³ Idem, p. 15.

while the Russian Prime Minister Goroskov said that the British presence in that part of the sea made the Russians not withdraw.¹⁰⁶⁴

Chairing the Congress, Bismarck demanded that these accusations be stopped with the attention focused not on “external” issues that could disrupt the intended work. Even though an assassination attempt was made against King Wilhelm I in the recent days, he did not want the assembly to be distracted by that event.¹⁰⁶⁵

However, the work of the Congress could not have flowed quite smoothly being a matter of great and extremely important matters, first of such nature, although it was rather clear that the great participating powers agreed in principle on some of the most important issues, such as the realities created by San Stefano’s peace, with a few exceptions, be annulled.

However, concerns and quarrels were more obvious between the fourth and sixth sessions, as a major battle for Russia’s influence and direct presence to the Balkans took place, although preliminary talks seemed to have reached a principled reconciliation even by the strongest rivals, England and Russia. Thus, in the fifth and sixth sessions, Austria-Hungary’s proposal for Russia to leave East Rumelia within six months was accepted; leaving Bulgaria within nine months was divided into two parts. Russia also had to leave Romania within twelve months.

At the eighth session, one of the most sensitive points of the Congress was discussed - the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At England’s suggestion, Congress should pave the way for Austria-Hungary to enter the province. Andras had played a major role in this regard, thanks to his skills before the Congress began as a result of which the issue was being resolved in favor of Vienna, although Hungary, as part of the Monarchy, was not pleased with this decision for the sole reason that in its southeastern part the number of Slavs was increasing, disrupting the ethnic relations between the Hungarians and the South Slavs.¹⁰⁶⁶

In the eighth session, the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina was finally removed from the agenda, while it was decided for Serbia to become an independent state. On this occasion, it was clearly stated that it should respect other nationalities within its borders, along with religious affiliations and ethnic identity. Also, in the session held on June 26, Serbia, at the resolve of the representative of the Ottoman Empire Mehmed Ali Pasha and Andras, pledged to use a fair attitude towards the non-Serb population in the southern parts given to them, vowing to refrain from any action to force the population abandon their lands. Serbian Foreign Minister Ristić, on behalf of Prince Milan, read a statement by which the country pledges to protect all the rights of the non-Serb population that will be included in the space of the Serbian state, from the free exercise of religion to property protection. According to Article 36, Serbia was expanding to Kurshumlija and part of the province of Vranje and the city of Vranje.¹⁰⁶⁷

Despite these benefits and independence, Serbia was conditioned by the Austrians to pay an entrepreneur, Baron Hirsch, to build a railway from Belgrade to the Macedonian-Ottoman border. In addition, Serbia had to co-operate in building another railway in the direction of Bulgaria and Turkey. Serbia was also asked to sign a trade agreement with

¹⁰⁶⁴ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, p. 18.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Idem, Protocol, no. 1, p. 101.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Idem, Protocol, no. 1, p. 103.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Idem, Protocol, no. 8, p. 160.

Austria and accept Austria's plans for a Danube navigation regime, granting Austria the status of a "most favored country". This strategy, by which Vienna turned Serbia into a vassal, culminated in 1881 with the signing of a secret treaty with Prince Milan for protection.¹⁰⁶⁸

At the thirteenth session, held on July 5, the issue of local autonomy for the Catholic population of Mirdita was discussed for the first time. This proposal came from the representative of Austria-Hungary and that of France being vindicated as "a matter of immunity of privileges that the Mirdita highlanders have enjoyed all the time, which in the future must be guaranteed".¹⁰⁶⁹

Memed Ali Pasha responded to the proposal. He stressed that there can be no talk of any privileges, as this would have chain consequences, though the Porte, in the framework of reforms, promised to take into account "special cases". Following an exchange of views with the representative of England and France, Sadullah Bey, proposed a compromise solution according to which the Porte would not change the status of Mirdita, meaning that they could still enjoy what were called "privileges", which apparently met the so-called European concession to Russia and the South Slavs on the precondition that the Congress would not discuss any autonomy other than that of Bulgaria, on the grounds that any similar demands made must be carried out within the framework of the Ottoman Empire's commitments to internal reforms, which it pledged to undertake before the Congress.¹⁰⁷⁰

After the accession of Serbia and Montenegro as independent states, to which parts of Albanian lands were granted, occupied during the Russo-Turkish war (to Serbia parts from Nish to Kurshumlia, and to Montenegro the territories of Plava, Gucia, Kuçi, Triepshi, Podogorica as well as Tivar on the coast). The Berlin Congress, in its fourteenth session, on June 29, included in its agenda Greece's request to expand to the north, in which case, the Greek Foreign Minister, T. Deliyannis demanded that his country be granted Crete, Thessaly, and Epirus.¹⁰⁷¹

He proposed a correction of the border on the river line of Salamaria (Ancient Peneus) - Kallamas by cutting off and detaching a large portion of the Albanian part. As the Ottoman delegation protested against the content of the Greek Minister's request, who called the territories claimed (Thessaly and Epirus) as "Greek provinces" and in relation to the unacceptable claims against a population which was not Greek, at Salisbury's intervention, it was decided that the words "Greek province" be replaced by "Border Provinces of the Kingdom of Greece", being also decided that the Ottoman Empire and Greece should reach a direct agreement on the correction of the border.¹⁰⁷²

Thus, Article 24 of the Treaty of Berlin was presented with the following content: "If the Sublime Porte and Greece are not able to reach an agreement on the correction of the border shown in the Thirteenth Protocol of the Congress of Berlin, Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy and Russia reserve the right to offer their mediation between the two parties to facilitate negotiations."¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁶⁸ See: Glenny, Misha: "*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*", Tiranë, p. 150.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*", Prishtinë, 2008, Protocol no. 8, p. 166.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Geis, Imanuel, op.cit., Idem, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷¹ See: Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*", Prishtinë, 2008, Protocol no. 9, p. 178.

¹⁰⁷² Idem.

¹⁰⁷³ Idem.

Despite its treatment as an exchange coin, the mention of Albanian kazas, cities that in the documents of the Congress are called Albanian (such as Ulqin, Tivar, and also Prokupa, Kurshumlia) and their introduction in protocols under this treatment and naming, meant proof of the presence of the Albanian ethnicity as a living and insurmountable factor, and this is important for history. Moreover, the Albanian ethnicity, as related, found a place in all the maps that the Congress considered in order to be reflected as such in the final one, with *Albanien* marked on the layout of the four vilayets.

THE BERLIN CONGRESS AND THE ALBANIAN ISSUE

The Albanians had neither their own representatives nor allies to support them at the Congress of Berlin. Since the Porte did not recognize an Albanian nationality, the situation was expected. This deprived them of any treatment beyond that of the Ottoman-Millet, where they had been kept for centuries. Facing a very significant situation, as their fate was being decided, in addition to the organization such as the Albanian League of Prizren, as their first political and social mechanism with demands for the protection of the country to autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, they took the necessary commitment to address Congress with letters, petitions and telegrams, sent from all over the world where they lived to let them know that historical realities, no matter what they had brought (different faiths), the Albanians had remained the same, while their ethnicity, like Arnavutluk, had also been accepted by the Ottoman Empire. In this clear sense, they protested more than any other people of the Balkans, who, although they had their representatives there, were not sure what awaited them, knowing that the Great European Powers were gathering there for their own interests to which others had to submit.¹⁰⁷⁴

From telegrams, letters, protests and memoranda sent to the Berlin Congress during the proceedings, and to those later addressed to the Congress Commission (it worked over the next three years at the level of ambassadors) and other senior representatives, their demands can be classified as follows:

- a) demands for the protection of ethnicity in its scope of dispersion, and
- b) demands for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, extending in accordance with the ethnic one, making it plainly clear that, if needed, an armed struggle would be used for these rights.

a) The demand for the protection of ethnicity in its scope of dispersion

The demand for the protection of the entirety of Albanian lands had no reason not to be primary, given the decisions of San Stefano and all the state terror that preceded them in the northern areas upon the invasions by the Serbian army, whose main purpose was ethnic cleansing of Albanian population, as foreseen by Garašanin's "Načertanije" of 1844, whose spirit will be preserved by other Serbian state projects. Therefore, in the telegrams and letters

¹⁰⁷⁴ The Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry (PAAD) stores about a hundred letters, telegrams, memoranda and various petitions of Albanians, but also of others, related to the Albanian issue. Most of them address Congress and Bismarck personally, then the representatives of England, Austria-Hungary, France and Italy.

received by the Berlin Congress since the beginning of the proceedings, most of them were protests against San Stefano's unjust decisions for fear that Europe might continue to be unfair to the Albanian cause, first of all because their representatives were not invited to Congress, and because of the doubt that due to intense Serbian, Greek, and Russian propaganda, Albanians were being condemned as a people not in line with future European interests, but rather with those of the Ottoman Empire, namely as an invader.

Officially, the first telegram to reach the Congress of Berlin is that of Muderiz Daut Effendi from Tivar, written and sent on the day of the commencement of work in Berlin. In few words he demanded that what happened at San Stefano should not be repeated here. "I hope, Your Majesties, that you will act according to God's right and you will not forget us or sell us out entirely," Daut Effendi wrote.¹⁰⁷⁵

Daut Effendi's telegram carries no accompanying and signatures, as customary in those days. It is a personal telegram that opens the long book of telegrams, letters, protests from different countries and different peoples, among which the Albanians are the most numerous and the longest. Thus, on June 13, the representatives of the Albanian League from Shkodra addressed the English representative to the Congress, Lord Beaconsfield (Disraeli) with a memorandum, in which, among other things, they point out the following:

"Albania, the only Balkan country, has no representatives in Berlin. It has no government of its own, and it is neither represented by the Turkish side."

Further on, the Memorandum said:

"The Albanians have their own national characteristics, many rich traditions and their own language. Our old history, but also that from Skanderbeg to Marko Boçari, is outstanding."¹⁰⁷⁶

The Shkodra residents then beg Beaconsfield for his country to act to protect Albanians as well, because "the protection of Albanian lands would prevent the incursion and strengthening of Pan-Slavism", which at that time was Russia's main concern in the Balkans, and this went against the interests of England.

On June 20, a telegram arrived to the Berlin Congress from Shkodra announcing that a decision had been made to oppose the San Stefano's accords, and that a similar action would be taken against those of Berlin if they followed the same path. The telegram reads:

"As early as the 16th of this month, we had the great honor to send a letter to our esteemed gathering in Berlin with our most sincere wishes for the success of the meeting. We, the Muslim and non-Muslim Albanians of the Shkodra district, decided to collect hundreds of signatures for our rights and for your excellencies to get acquainted with the content before it reaches you, then in this telegram we are briefly informing you about its content noting that we Albanians want to preserve the integrity of our lands under the greatness of the Sultan."

The long letter from the people of Shkodra, discussed in their telegram on June 20, will reach the Congress on June 27.¹⁰⁷⁷

The letter has a total of 451 signatures and in general, in this regard, as the largest petition appeared as unique to Congress. It is signed on the front page by Muderiz Daut Effendi, and Selino Gurezi and Filip Muzani. As in the telegram, the letter also urges for the

¹⁰⁷⁵ Documents of PAAD, Türkiye, Box 143, Doc. no. 214.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Idem, Doc. no. 216.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Dokuments of PAAD, Türkiye, 143, Doc. no. 128

protection of the lands under the care of the Porte. Not mentioning the Sultan, on June 21 a similar telegram was addressed to Congress by representatives of Southern Albania from Janina.¹⁰⁷⁸

Among other things the telegram points out:

“We strongly protest against the partition of our lands. We hope you will be attentive to our case.”

The telegram is signed by Mustafa Pasha, Mehmedali Pasha, Abedin Bey, Omer Bey, Xhelal Bey, Hasan Bey, Sabri Bey, Mehemed Bey, Mehmedali Vrioni, Abdyl Frashëri, Osman Tahiri, Muslim Vasini, Xhelosh Osmani, Ali Leskoviku, Sylejman Bey, and Tefik Bey.

Another telegram, which also deserves attention, is that of June 25, sent to Congress by representatives of the Kosova Vilayet. The signatories of this long telegram are Mufti Zenel Abedini from Prishtina, Zija Bey from Gjilan, Hysen Aga from Gjakova, Abdurrahim Aga from Peja, Halil Bey from Tetova, Zenel Efendia from Shkup, Tadea Latini from Prizren and Hasan Aga from Vranja. It informed the Congress of the plight of the immigrants expelled from Kursumlija and Vranje following the decisions of the Treaty of San Stefano:

“Thousands upon thousands of our innocent people have been forcibly expelled from their homes, treated like animals by the invaders. Women, children, and the elderly were thrown into the streets and mistreated. They are now at the mercy of cruelty. Remaining under the open sky, they have lost everything they had for centuries. Many of our brothers wishing to live in their own lands were ruthlessly killed and many others were arrested and their fate is unknown. Keep in mind that our lands are inhabited by the majority of Albanians and only a small part of them are Greeks, Bulgarians or Latins and now we as a majority are being ignored because of the minority. In the name of justice and humanity, in the name of civilization, we ask for your support and protection so that we are not left at the mercy of ruthlessness.”¹⁰⁷⁹

Regarding the grave situation of the Muhajirs (immigrants) in Kosova after the Russian-Turkish war and the Serbo-Turkish war of that winter, after the invasion of the Serbian army in those parts forcibly expelling them from their lands, the Congress was once again addressed by Mufti Zenel Abedini from Prishtina, warning that the great powers, if not for other reasons, then for simple human reasons, had to take care of that large part of the Albanian population that had become victims of war, but also for unjust treaties, such as that of San Stefano.

Many Albanians, whose lands were granted to Greater Bulgaria after San Stefano also sought protection from the Congress. Among them a telegram should be noted, addressed to the Congress from Janina, signed by Iliaz Pasha and many other Albanians from Dibra and Manastir, dated June 26 of that year. Then, a telegram by the Mufti of Shkup, dated June 24, and Rrustem Pasha's telegram dated June 20. A letter by Mirimon Hoti and many other Albanians from Manastir and Dibra, and a letter of the group of Albanians from Istanbul, dated June 20, all sharing a common message calling for the preservation of Albanian lands.¹⁰⁸⁰

¹⁰⁷⁸ Idem.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Idem, Doc. no. 33

In addition to the letters and telegrams initially urging the Congress to protect their lands, there were those that went one step further. On June 16, a letter of the Kapedan of Mirdita, Prenk Bibë Doda, reached the Congress, followed by the signatures of 51 bayraktars of the province,¹⁰⁸¹ demanding that privileges be respected, would be realized within an autonomy within the authority of the Porte.¹⁰⁸²

The protocols of the Congress show that this letter had attracted the attention of the participants, especially of the representatives of Austria-Hungary and those of France, who in the thirteenth session made it a matter of conversation, though without any approval, but to be included in the protocol. This will not happen with the other demands of the Albanians for autonomy, such as that of the Albanians of Istanbul on June 20, in which autonomy for the only Albanian vilayet was demanded out of four under the supervision of the Porte, which in a way was nothing more than a matter of time, as long as the international settlement factor would need to keep the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.¹⁰⁸³

b) Demand for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire in a single Albanian vilayet

The letter of the Albanians of Istanbul of June 20, sent to the Congress, without a doubt, after all those telegrams and protest letters coming from different regions, gives the impression it could all be but a reflection of the anger dissipated by the non-existence of a center to direct and supervise them on the basis of a program with certain political demands, as were those of June 10 in Prizren on the occasion of the establishment of the Albanian League, though they never reached the Berlin Congress, before or after. Without going into the reasons why something like that was missing when it was known that the Albanian League of Prizren had started work three days before the Berlin Congress and since this has to do with researching the basic documents of the League itself (if they can be found) and, without excluding the possibility that the participants of the Congress, through the resources that the participating powers had at their disposal, like the delegation of the Porte in the Congress, were informed about the Albanian response to the decisions of San Stefano, but also of those who would follow in Berlin, it can be said that the letter of the Albanians of Istanbul, in a way, carried the message of the attitudes taken in Prizren by the representatives of all Albanian lands. In that letter, signed by Pashko Vasa, Omer Vrioni, Omer Shefkiu, S. Toptani, Hajredin Tekitani, I. Husmedini, A. Dinoshi, and G. Samiu, in nine pages, a description is provided from the historical past of the Albanian people.¹⁰⁸⁴

The Albanians of Istanbul, realizing that Bismarck had a strong influence and was the one who maintained the main formula of future agreements, decided to turn to him, not only as a Presiding, to explain to him the centuries-old struggle against the foreigners, from Pyrrhos to Skanderbeg, in order to show European affiliation as a historical and existential determination, which still remained the main goal under the prevailing circumstances.

"We are the oldest people in the Balkans, Highness. Our history is outstanding and full of dramatic events. We were the only ones who for a single quarter of a century fought alone against the Ottoman Empire when it was at the height of its power and when everyone feared

¹⁰⁸¹ Idem, Doc. no. 20

¹⁰⁸² Idem.

¹⁰⁸³ Idem.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Dokuments of PAAD, on list 8 and 9 of telegrams, row no.: 33,34, 35 and 40.

it like a devil. And today, we are being forgotten. Someone is intentionally ignoring us as if we never fought for our independence.”¹⁰⁸⁵

Pashko Vasa and other signatories further point out, as emphasized in most of the letters and telegrams, that “Albanians are one and the same regardless of creed, since when it comes to defending their homeland they forget their religious affiliation. Because, the only religion for them is the protection of the homeland. This means, Greatness that we have decided not to give up our lands. For now *we want autonomy under the rule of his Highness the Sultan*, as this is at the moment the most suitable option for us.”¹⁰⁸⁶

Then, details are given on how the Albanian autonomy would look like and what territories would be included in the autonomy, mentioning the four vilayets: Shkodra, Kosova, Manastir and Janina.

At the end of the letter, expressing confidence it would be read by Bismarck himself with due attention as if it were ahead of the entire Albanian people, the signatories once again stressed the autonomy under the Sultan’s crown and the willingness to reject any decision the Congress would take to the detriment of the Albanians and their cause.

Although when it comes to letters, telegrams, memoranda and protests addressed to Congress, most of the time they were being addressed to the Chairman, German Chancellor Bismarck, in addition to being carefully recorded in the main register, from what comes out of the protocols, one may not know if they had been handled directly in the main hearings. The only exception here is a passage from the thirteenth meeting when the representative of the Porte, Karateodori Pasha on the occasion of the controversy with the Russian and Greek representative about the territories that Greece claimed in Epirus, mentions petitions from the Albanian population of Janina and Preveza, referring to the register of the Congress, mentioning the numbers of the register from the fifteenth to the twenty-third.

Chancellery sources indicate that Bismarck had knowledge of almost all the requests that came from the side, i.e. letters, petitions, memoranda and opinions, after noting that before the start of each session, separately, he met with representatives of the delegations asking for details about those addressing the Congress as requests, complaints or petitions.¹⁰⁸⁷

This, in turn, is evidenced by the additional information he sought from ambassadors, consuls and other diplomatic sources on issues he deemed important. Among them, the announcement of the German ambassador in Istanbul, Hasfield, from October of that year is worth considering for additional explanations about the autonomy of the Albanians within the Ottoman Empire, which was announced to the public in September of that year on Sami Frashëri’s newspaper “*Tercuman-i Sark*”. In this report, Hasfield, falling into the ranks of those whom the Chancellor treated as “commissioned especially for supplementing certain data”, states that Albanians, dissatisfied with the decisions of the Berlin Congress, have formed a Revolutionary Committee, which has announced the program for autonomy, with the following demands:¹⁰⁸⁸

1. Union of Albanian vilayets into a single vilayet.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Idem, no. 40.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Idem.

¹⁰⁸⁷ See: Accompanying notes of the German chancellery during the holding of the Berlin Congress archived in the basic documents of the Congress, box 145, file no.3.

¹⁰⁸⁸ PAAD Documents, Türkiye, 143/23.

2. Employees with knowledge of the Albanian language should be employed in those vilayets.

3. The meeting of the Assembly of the Albanian vilayet is held twice a year.

4. The language of everyday conversations and that of schools should be Albanian, while Turkish should be only used only for communication with the central government in Istanbul.

5. A local police should be established by the people of the vilayet.

The demands are concluded with the position that Ohri shall be the capital of the autonomous Albanian vilayet, while taxes should stay in the vilayet.¹⁰⁸⁹

Hasfield concludes that, “it is likely that Albanians will enjoy the support of the Turkish government authorities regarding such proposals,” noting that Albanians will continue to be encouraged to sabotage the decisions of the Berlin Congress, especially the controversial points.¹⁰⁹⁰

The issue of *Albanian autonomy*, as a transitional solution, which would be in the interest of Europeans for a Balkans outside Russian influence, which was expected following the creation of the South Slavic states leaning more to the West than to Russia, will be reflected in some of the most important newspapers of the time, which did not agree with the decisions of the Berlin Congress that the Albanians and their problems be treated they way they were being treated.

“Why not give them autonomy?” “What do they have in common with the Orient when they are known to be the oldest people in the Balkans?”¹⁰⁹¹

Committing to the autonomy of the Albanians as the only possible solution that could ensure peace in the Balkans, the Great Powers are called upon to use the remaining time to correct certain things.

THE PLACE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE “ALBANIAN LEAGUE OF PRIZREN”

The “Albanian League of Prizren” (1878-1881) was a broad movement aimed at protecting the territorial integrity inhabited by Albanians on a demand for autonomy emerging as an institutional form of the protection with the provision to rise to the level of an autonomous state, in line with further developments, whether those related to the internal reforms of the Ottoman Empire, or its complete dissolution, as will actually happen. It was neither a secret organization nor clandestine or revolutionary, but open and with a clear political, national program not only in terms of definition, but also in terms of nature, as it required that Albanians step by step and naturally, through an “Ottoman Albania”, protect their ethnic being within the Ottoman Empire.

The proclamation of the Provisional Government in early 1881 and the extension of its authority over most of the Vilayet of Kosova and part of that of the Manastir, was the best evidence of this determination. As the only patriotic organization that operated in the conditions of the Eastern Crisis, the “Albanian League of Prizren” was identified with the Albanian National Movement itself.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Idem.

¹⁰⁹¹ “*Hamburgische Correspondenz*”, 15 October 1878.

The “Albanian League of Prizren” was founded and operated in one of the most dramatic moments that Albania went through during the difficult centuries of Ottoman rule, at a time when Tsarist Russia with the Treaty of San Stefano and the Great Powers upon the decisions of the Berlin Congress decided to divide the lands of the Albanians in favor of the neighboring monarchies, thus threatening their existence as a nation. In these dramatic circumstances for Albania’s fate, the “Albanian League of Prizren” undertook the great historical task of uniting the entire Albanian people in a war to affirm national identity in the international arena, opposing the partition of native lands for the benefit of the neighboring states and realizing the major task of the National Awakening - the formation of the Albanian national state.”¹⁰⁹²

This objective, the “Albanian League of Prizren”, as an Albanian patriotic organization, must bring to the forefront of this historic mission, thus rejecting some of the different and negative views, looking at the League as the right hand of the Ottoman Empire, as a “despised” creature, which would later vegetate in the opposite direction, out of the surveillance of a center that would mainly serve the process of undermining European peace.¹⁰⁹³

The creation and evolution of the “Albanian League of Prizren” from an organization seeking to protect the homeland from partitioning threatening from all sides to (which it did successfully in defending Plava and Gucia, and then Gruda and Hoti until the war for Ulqin), went through several stages of its general development. It is difficult to draw clear definitions between them, although some German historians (Peter Bartel and Hans Diter Schanderl) assess that in the first phase of development the “Albanian League of Prizren” it was almost entirely a Muslim organization and did not promise anything but serve the needs of the Ottoman Empire both from the outside and the inside. Bartel says that, “for the Albanians at that time it was very important to protect their lands and for such a thing the protection of the Sultan was more than necessary.”¹⁰⁹⁴

The same author, speaking about the first stage of the League, says that from the point of view of time it extends to the autumn of 1879, when it was mainly turned to defending the lands against Montenegro. “Autonomy is hardly mentioned, though even if it is mentioned, it is shyly done and without any clear concept.”¹⁰⁹⁵

The second stage of the League will be investigated from the end of 1879 until June 1880, when a seven-point letter sent to the Sultan will call for autonomy. The time following June 1880 and the sensational events of autumn and winter of that year will be called “with strong turns”, defining the Albanian League as an organism demanding autonomy, a capital, its own income, and everything a country needs to self-administer, from a General Governor, who must be Albanian, to the country’s officials and tax oversight.¹⁰⁹⁶

The last stage is considered to be that of a direct confrontation and war by the forces of the “Albanian League” in 1880 on defending Ulqin against the Ottoman forces. Finally, the Albanians, unable to withstand an army organized and equipped with heavy weapons, will retreat and the town will be handed over to Montenegro by the Sublime Porte in accordance with its obligations under the decisions of the Berlin Congress. Though, they will then form a Provisional Government, which in a few months will extend its authority to the vilayet of

¹⁰⁹² Frashëri, Kristo: “*Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit 1878-1881*”, Tiranë 2012, p. 702.

¹⁰⁹³ Among the historians who saw the League as a product of the Porte Gate for political purposes is the Serbian historian, Gopčević, Spiridon, promoted in Vienna, who, in his book “*Oberalbanien und seine Liga*”, published in Leipzig in 1881, managed to blur the image of the League, but not to deny its character in defense of its own lands, which he described as “the war of the Albanians against the Europeans and their civilization for interests of Islamic fundamentalism”. The other Serbian historian Hađivasiljević (“*Arbanaška Liga*”, Begorad, 1908), sharing more or less the same view, is also known for supporting the misinformation about Bismarck’s alleged meetings with Albanian representatives in Berlin (Abdyl Frashëri and Mehmed Vrioni in 1879).

¹⁰⁹⁴ Bartl, Peter, cit.op., p. 187.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Idem.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Idem.

Kosova and partly to that of the Manastir, from where clear messages will be sent that the Albanians have not forgotten their state nor their administration, which began as autonomy and, at any rate, will end as national independence.¹⁰⁹⁷

Bartel estimates that the “Albanian League” continued to operate in some way even after the military defeat of 1881, but the efforts of the Albanians at that time were rather detached and without any interconnected action in all vilayets, as it happened at the beginnings.¹⁰⁹⁸

Removing the dilemma of whether the Albanian League was initially “a pure Muslim movement or not”, Bartel concludes that the Albanian League of Prizren, regardless of the tactics it had to use, began, continued and ended as a national movement, the main burden of which was borne by the Muslim Albanians, joined by the Albanians of the Catholic faith of the North. Formed as a necessity to protect itself from external plundering (namely partitioning of territories), it became, over time, a national movement, which sought autonomy for the Albanian vilayets under the umbrella of the Porte. In fact, its radical wing wanted to take this autonomy further - to full independence.¹⁰⁹⁹

“Three years of activity of the League mark a bright and new page in the history of the Albanian people,” Schanderl says. It turned out to be homogeneous in military terms and managed to prevent some of the decisions of the Berlin Congress, especially Paragraph 28, providing for Plava and Gucia to secede to Montenegro and Paragraph 34, recommending that Janina and Larissa also come under Greek rule.¹¹⁰⁰

The League, therefore, the author thinks, for the first time after a long Ottoman rule, greatly promoted national and freedom goals, which would eventually be established thirty-four years later, although two-thirds of the Albanian ethnicity was left outside, along with half of the population occupied by Serbia, Montenegro and Greece during the 1912 Balkan wars.

Georg Stadmüller shows a slightly more prudent attitude in terms of minimizing the size of the Albanian League as a movement and its results assessing that “The League did not achieve the character of a great popular movement, because its leaders were constantly stuck by external influences, so even their attitudes could not be united.”¹¹⁰¹

The issue of external influences, mentioned repeatedly, was not only inevitable in those circumstances, though necessary, especially as since the beginning of the Eastern Crisis, and the Ottoman Empire, necessarily, through the wars it lost and subsequent treaties, were on a retreat and it was only a matter of time and of international conjunctures before returning to a starting point to get in line with the new constructions to be drawn, such as supervised autonomy or as states, creating a new mosaic in the Balkan reality, as actually happened.

Certainly, in these conditions, Albanians had to be subject to external influences in a special way, as they were within a limit when their behavior was determined by loyalty to the Porte, as it appeared to guarantee protection of their ethnicity, and on the other hand they tried to put their interests within the framework of internal reforms - as happened with the request for autonomy, which was rejected by the Sublime Porte on the pretext that this was not permitted being trapped by the “Ottoman-Millet”, where Muslim Albanians were included and not allowed the status of nationality. However, autonomy was also rejected abroad, especially from Russia, projecting that it would be detrimental to their interests on that part out of fear that “by its side, one day, both Westerners and Easterners would come to terms against Russian interests”.¹¹⁰²

¹⁰⁹⁷ Idem, p. 188.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Idem, p. 190.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Idem.

¹¹⁰⁰ Schanderl, Hans: “Die Albanienpolitik Österreich-Ungarns und Italien 1877-1908”, 1950, p. 124.

¹¹⁰¹ Stadmüller, Georg: “Volkstumgeschichte”, at “Albanische Forschungen”, p. 376.

¹¹⁰² “Hamburgische Correspondenz”, June 1882.

Therefore, reasonably, the coryphaeus of this propaganda from the time of the Eastern Crisis onwards, while Albanians kept silent, presented them as “protectors of the Turks in Europe” tarnishing them as their opponents, while fighting for their interests from the outset related to their status of autonomy within the Empire, then sued as “peace breakers, destroyers of European accords and interests.”¹¹⁰³

Clearly, this condemnation followed the Albanians all the time while those who took an interest on them were many of the well-known diplomats of the Great Powers in Istanbul and elsewhere, among them Germans Hasfield and later Radulin, as most distinguished. In their reports, they initially presented the “Albanian League of Prizren” often as an “Ottoman creature”, “a disguise of the Porte” and the like, while later, as the League took a turn of war with the Porte they labeled it as “destroyer of peace, destroyer of accords of the Congress of Berlin”.¹¹⁰⁴

From this point of view, it turns out that Ambassador Radukin, who came after Hasfield, would surpass him many times over. In his frequent reports to Bismarck, Radukin often underestimates Albanians' efforts for autonomy, whether in pen or war, accusing them of “working against European interests”! Thus, according to a report, as the course of the Albanians after all the efforts within the Porte to ensure autonomy, in line with the suggestions of Europeans for internal political reforms, Ambassador Radulin suggests to the German government that “it is in the interest of Europe that - despite the current turmoil in the Balkans coming as a result of the uprisings of Albanians, Bulgarians and Kucovlachs - to preserve Turkey as long as possible in Europe.”¹¹⁰⁵

How far one may one go with the thesis that “the opponents of the Berlin Congress agreements were opponents of European strategic interests” is made clear from the same report Radulin addressed to Bizmark announcing that “Albanians have been plundering in the Balkans; they are irresponsible; they are attacking Turkish garrisons; they have no respect for the Ottoman authorities and they are the ones who in 1878 in Gjakova killed Mehmed Ali Pasha never caring less!

The Ottoman Empire can only utilize them now to use violence against Armenians and other nations in East Asia fighting for independence, who would be free of Turkey long ago if it were not for the Albanian terrible officers, who, wherever they set their foot flatten to the ground everything they find.”¹¹⁰⁶

Although with a great deal of controversy in the report, including absurdities (condemning Albanians for being “irresponsible” for attacking Ottoman garrisons and disobeying the laws of the Porte, while those who disobey the Porte are said to be in the command posts of the Turkish army and sent to suppress independence movements against Armenians and other peoples), however it is noteworthy to know this way of observing of Albanians, with the dioptry these German diplomats in the East use, as well as their political activity and opposition, is done in exactly the same language as that of Slavic propaganda!

This showed that despite the backstages taking place since the Berlin Congress and provoking opposition, wars and deepening crisis on the territories treated at this Congress, though predictions were otherwise, the attitudes had remained unchanged. So the *status quo* was to freeze everything, including those movements and developments that were irresistible, and that, according to Radulin, had to be done for the sake of Europe, even though it was known that the Porte could not be maintained, let alone strengthened. Any procrastination in the name of this goal would certainly suit Russia and its supporters in the Balkans, as will happen in the coming years, when, with the exception of a shrinking and truncated Albania, the rest will fall completely under its influence, which thirty-four years after the revision of

¹¹⁰³ Idem.

¹¹⁰⁴ PAAD Documents, report of the German Ambassador in Istanbul, Türkei, Box 143, doc. 70.

¹¹⁰⁵ PAAD Documents, Türkei, 143, doc. no. 78.

¹¹⁰⁶ Idem.

San Stefano's decisions, it will restore the lost positions at the Berlin Congress to an even greater and more favorable extent.

These were the circumstances in which the "Albanian League of Prizren" of 1878 was founded and operated, facing as enemies not only the devouring Slav and Greek neighbors, directly supported by the Russians, who would not stop tearing apart their ethnic trunk, but also the Ottoman Empire itself, although it pretended as if defending and dividing the fate of the Albanians, though in fact by ignoring the Albanians demands for autonomy and simultaneously describing them as "the flower of Islam" present them as supporters of a project that was out of date, eventually lost the only and last chance given at the Berlin Congress, to somehow preserve its legacy in the European space, built and extended over five centuries .

Despite the external point of view and its appearance in accordance with the spheres of interest, which were not in favor of the Albanians, the "Albanian League of Prizren" emerges as the first and most organized movement for national autonomy and independence on the long and arduous road of the Albanian people for national independence. By its birth, it broke off two stereotypes threatening to turn into permanent political clichés". One is that of Albanians as part of the Ottoman milieu, which would exclude them from the family of European peoples and its civilization, despite their big merits to it as an ancient people, being its founders. they were its founders. And the other, as the last supporters and fighters for the Ottoman Empire in the European part, whose time was passed and dying.

MACEDONIAN CRISIS, "ALBANIAN ALLIANCE" AND "LEAGUE OF PEJA"

Over time, the Balkan crisis will deepen precisely because of the concessions that the Ottoman Empire made to Christians, especially Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians, always to the detriment of the interests of Albanians as their ethnicity was being violated, while one side of the Young Turk movement would start accepting something from the Islamic language to raise the spirit of Ottoman patriotism, a part of the Albanian officers, members of the Committee "*Union and Progress*" in the branches of Albanian cities (Manastir, Shkup, Tirana, Elbasan and other cities), will oblige a fighting spirit on the movement in defense of the Albanian ethnicity, linking it to the commitments of the Ottoman Empire to defend itself at every corner. Evidently, some of the Albanian officers from the Imperial Army in Thessaloniki, Manastir and Shkup joined the Albanian detachments in the south of the country, to oppose the activity of the Greek gangs, but also the Bulgarian and Serbian ones, which terrorized the Albanians, while assisted by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece were pretending to be national liberation movements, whose activity was known to be aimed at destabilizing the Albanian vilayets (Kosova, Manastir and Janina) in order to galvanize them as to suit Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian appetites.

This development should be somewhat clarified as it marks the further degree of factorization of Albanians from both inside and outside. From the inside – showing that the survival of the Ottoman Empire was closely linked to the protection of the Albanian ethnicity from fragmentation and acceptance of their autonomy. And, from the outside – as they as the main supporters of the Young Turk opposition, will help its historic victory, which recompense would have meeting their demands for autonomy, i.e. accepting what was projected as an "Ottoman Albania". This demand, evidently, will turn into a catalyst for the next great Balkan crisis on which almost all the fragile pillars, which had held the state of thirty-four years of European *status quo* will move and even fall.

Becoming a factor and demands for national identity and autonomy, and in particular the decisive role they will play in the final phase of the Hamidian regime might have provoked mutual provocations against Albanians. On one hand, actions by the neighbors (Serbs, Greeks

and Bulgarians) pushed and supervised by Russia, will try to conquer territories of what was already perceived by them as “remnants of the Ottoman heritage”, preventing any birth of an Albanian state (as a dam against Pan-Slavism - as projected by Austria-Hungary and England). On the other hand, Albanians will be provoked by the behavior of the Sublime Porte, which not only rejected their demands as much as they expressed determination for autonomy, to remain in the course of international support and ostensibly reforms, with their main target being settling accounts with the Albanians (suspension of self-rule they enjoyed in many parts, where they maintained internal and other independence), and continuing to make concessions suiting Slavic countries and Russia. By doing so they were adding more fuel to the flame, turning foreign projects of intervention inevitable, either when underlining the Albanian factor as “the flower of Islam” or when rejecting Albanian autonomy, as Albanians demanded.

This led to the aggravation of relations with the Albanians, but also to accumulation of a great anguish of the Young Turk opposition, being drummed up in many ways, triggering events that will lead to a crisis with greater dimensions and depth though the opposite was expected. Thus, tensions between Albanians and the Ottoman Empire, on the one hand, and those of the Balkan countries with the Ottoman Empire on the other, as a chain, were first linked to Sultan Hamid’s decree of April 22, 1896, “*On Reforms in the Vilayet of Rumelia*”, continuing with the Turkish-Greek war and the loss of Crete (1897). They reached a high point with the Mürzsteg Agreement on reforms in Macedonia (1903), where Austria-Hungary and Russia will almost entirely take over the mandate of oversight in this part, bringing the Balkan crisis to a critical stage that instead of stabilizing the *status quo*, it led to ultimate explosion - the First Balkan War and the end of the Ottoman Empire.

The Decree “*On Reforms in the Vilayet of Rumelia*”, which Sultan Hamid argued was in line with Paragraph 23 of the Berlin Congress forcing the Ottoman Empire to implement internal reforms related to the equality of the Christian population but also of resolving other issues related to local governments in accordance with the demands of different ethnicities, in fact went to the detriment of the Albanians and a further deepening of the Balkan crisis.

The Ottoman Empire continued rejecting their demands for autonomy, which, from a broader perspective, they also complied with Paragraph 23 of the Berlin Congress, while taking into account those of the Christian population for “equality”, such as the appointment of Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek deputy-valis (in the vilayets of Edirne, Thessaloniki, Manastir, and Kosova). Their inclusion in administrative councils (mejlises) of those vilayets even in the parts where there were no members at all, in addition to the engagement in the ranks of the police and gendarmerie with Christians of the same nationalities, constituting 10 percent of their personnel and others, meant weakening the position of the Albanians and increasing the strength of the Slavic minorities to the detriment of the Albanians as a majority population. Through these measures an opportunity rose to destabilize the situation even in places where there had been no likelihood of such a thing to happen.

The proclamation by the Sultan of the April reforms set in motion all the political forces of the Albanian society, uniting among themselves even those that so far had differences, as the inclusion of the vilayets of Manastir and Kosova in the area of reforms opened the real possibility of their secession from other Albanian vilayets (Shkodra and Janina) led to the creation of circumstances for them to accept a status for the Slav-Macedonian lands outside any ethnic reality, being in favor of the Albanians.¹¹⁰⁷ This created opportunities for neighboring countries to intervene in accordance with their long-standing plans to turn them into their prey.

In this situation demonstrating open claims on Albanian lands, Serbian and Greek claims, emerging as early as 1844 with Garašanin’s “*Načertanije*” and the Greek “*Megalo idea*”, Bulgarian ones will be added. The recognition of the right of the Bulgarian “*Exarchate*” by the Ottoman Empire in the Vilayet of Manastir and that of Thessaloniki, gave rise to the presence of

¹¹⁰⁷ Idem, p. 262.

Bulgarian propaganda, trying to realize its hegemonic claims in these parts. Thus, what the Greeks had been doing for a long time, the Bulgarians, with the help of their own agents, had begun to form “liberation squads”, raising increasing concerns among the Albanian population with a growing degree of insecurity.

The proclamation of the decree “On reforms in Rumelia” hit the Vilayet of Kosovo the most, because despite an Albanian majority, reaching to 60-90 per cent in all the sanjaks, the Serb and Bulgarian minorities, which till then had enjoyed the right to their own church, native schools, and being continually under the care of Serbia and Russia, turned into the privileged ones. So it was expected that the reforms would be viewed with great distrust in the vilayet. This led to a delay in the implementation of reforms in the Vilayet of Kosova in November 1896, being met with opposition by Albanians everywhere (Prizren, Peja, Gjakova, Gjilan, Shkup, etc.). In addition to the rejection, protests and uprisings began to be accompanied with political demands, with increasing demands for special reforms for Albania leading to autonomy. Organizing the resistance, attaining in many parts strains of an armed resistance, Haxhi Zeka, a patriot from Peja, appeared.¹¹⁰⁸

Armed resistance against the reforms in Rumelia, resulting in their complete failure, were preceded by numerous protests in all Albanian provinces. They were accompanied by widespread support from Albanian activists in the press of the time and in the Diaspora, setting up a very successful propaganda “front”. Clearly, the Ottoman Empire was not only able to protect the interests of the Albanians, nor its presence in the European part, as promised, but rather pressured by the Great Powers and Russia’s vassals in the Balkans, who had already announced their hegemonic plans against the Albanian ethnicity, were doing the opposite. This demanded an Albanian response. Of this nature are some of the memoranda sent by Albanian patriots to the Sultan and other high-ranking officials of the Porte.

One of them, signed by Dervish Hima, is distinguished by the severity of the criticism leveled at the Sultan for not defending the interests of the Albanians, as well as the clarity of the demands made regarding the interests of the Albanians. He highlighted the one demanding a ban on propaganda and foreign schools in Albania, expulsion of foreign teachers and their replacement with Albanian teachers (Muslims and Christians), development of education in the mother tongue and the opening of schools in Albanian to help consolidate the Albanian nation, protect its self-existence, eradicate foreign influences, and lead to the recognition of Albanian nationality by the Sublime Porte and foreign states.¹¹⁰⁹

Similar demands were sent to the Sublime Porte from other centers, such as the one in Bucharest signed “*On behalf of the Albanian people*”, prepared on the initiative of Ibrahim Temo, Nikola Naço, and Faik Konica. This memorandum too, based on Article 23 of the decisions of the Berlin Congress, required the following reforms: the release of all Albanians imprisoned and interned for political reasons; banning Greek-Slavic school-church propaganda in Albania; opening of Albanian national schools; establishing an Albanian church and the use of the Albanian language in Greek and Slavic churches.¹¹¹⁰

The same memorandum, extended with historical aspects of the Albanian people as an ancient people with roots in antiquity, drafted in French, addressed in the form of a petition was sent to the Great Powers seeking their support and protection.

The petition called for the support of the Great Powers to resolve the Albanian issue by implementing a series of radical reforms leading to the formation of an autonomous Albanian state unit. The basic content of this document was the demand to unite the vilayets (Shkodra, Kosova, Manastir and Janina) in a single vilayet, with the capital Manastir and an Albanian governor (vali) at its head. It also defined the organizational structure of the vilayet, where a 24-

¹¹⁰⁸ Idem, p. 262.

¹¹⁰⁹ Idem, p. 263.

¹¹¹⁰ Idem, p. 263.

member council of elders (6 for each vilayet), Muslim and Christian, would function next to the Governor-General, according to the composition of the sanjak and kaza population.¹¹¹¹

In addition to petitions, memoranda and various letters sent to the great powers from different parts and in addition to a campaign in the Albanian Diaspora press to mobilize all forces to face the new danger threatening the Albanians by the compromises made by Sultan Hamid to the detriment of Albanians. The proclamation of Rumelia reforms in Albania, particularly in the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir, threatened the risk of partitioning due to Ottoman reforms, so efforts were made for a joint organized resistance against the interventions of neighboring states and the Sublime Porte. This would be achieved by establishing a new Albanian connection, which, following the example of the “League of Prizren” (1878-1881) took over the task.¹¹¹²

Haxhi Zeka was the one who took over this action.¹¹¹³ The indefatigable Peja-man was put in charge of the efforts and managed to gather some of the important leaders of the Albanian movement in Prishtina at the end of October 1896. They discussed the measures to be taken for a proper response to the Ottoman reforms, detrimental to the Albanians and beneficial for Serb-Bulgarian expansionism in their ethnic space. At the same time, the rejection had to be linked to the demand for autonomy. The Albanian League of Prizren repeatedly highlighted the determination of Albanians to protect their lands and this was done through the demands for autonomy linked to the spirit of reforms and their implementation, imposed by the Sublime Porte as obligations coming from decisions of the Berlin Congress, especially Paragraph 23.

Relying on this paragraph almost twenty years after its appearance, Albanians faced an absurdity by having to fight and also accept the spirit of reforms detrimental to them, such as those of the new decree of Rumelia, and even clinging to it when seeking autonomy. This made things difficult for them in relation to both the Ottoman Empire and the international community, which did not look at the implementation of reforms from an internal interests of those affected, but rather from the outside and on their own accounts. Under the circumstances, Albanians will be condemned as opponents of the reforms – “*defenders of the old feudal-despotic order*”, and also as opponents of “*equality*” of the Christian population working to their detriment and discriminating against them..

The first prejudice of Albanians as defenders at all cost of the Ottoman Empire will be created to Albanians by Sultan Hamid himself with his policy towards them, trying to instrumentalize them whenever he faced the pressure of the Great Powers to give way to the Slavic and Greek peoples. The latest case was the recognition of Crete’s autonomy following a war with the Greeks and the permission of the Serbian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches to expand their activities in the Vilayet of Kosova and Manastir, together with the opening of Serbian schools. and Bulgarian while banning Albanians having schools, even private ones. While the second prejudice on Albanians, as usual, came from neighboring countries (Serbia

¹¹¹¹ The idea of the *Council of Elders* as a higher instance came from Sami Frashëri, who in his work “*Shqipëria ç’ka qenë, ç’është e ç’do të bëhetë*” (“*Albania what was, what is and what will be*”) estimated that Albania should not follow the monarchical model but of the provincial representation, where the traditional structures of tribes, banners, and communities would play an important role, functionalized in the new circumstances.

¹¹¹² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 264.

¹¹¹³ *Haxhi Zeka* had taken part in the war of the Albanian League of Prizren. He was a member of the Central Council and a close associate of Sulejman Vokshi. He continued his efforts to fulfill the ideals of the League even after its dissolution. For his patriotic activity, in 1893 he retired to Istanbul, where he was held in custody for three years. When he was released, he returned to Albania and continued his patriotic work, which will be crowned with the establishment of the “*Albanian Covenant*” and the “*Peja Covenant*”. At all times he will make efforts to revive the movement on a national scale, linking the protection of the Albanian ethnicity from its plundering neighbors with the demands for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. He will be killed in Peja, on February 21, 1902. The assassin was the captain of the gendarmerie, Adem Zajmi from Gjakova. It is estimated that the murder of the Albanian patriot was the fruit of a cooperation between the Serbian chauvinist circles and the Ottoman authorities, which, in these circumstances, found a common language and even cooperated well.

and Greece), whereupon Albanian demands for autonomy will be qualified as an “*Islamist course of Albanians*” in defense of the Caliphate and the like.

This situation will make it very difficult for Albanians. Because, it forced them to fight in two directions at once, a task that would not be easy, as from the outside and looking sideways and disconnected - at least from a rejectionist point of view - they seemed credible. Once again a similar situation arose when after the outbreak of war with Greece, the Ottoman Empire will try to use protests by Albanians in the vilayet of Kosova, first in Gjakova, Peja and then in Prishtina and other parts and crowned with the creation of a new convention called the “*Albanian Alliance*”, by calling it a sign of “*loyalty to the Sultan and the Caliphate*”.

With this slogan, Sultan Hamid managed to mobilize a good number of Albanians from the vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir in his war against the Greeks. Even the first part of the manifesto of the “*Albanian Alliance*”, which emphasized the protection of Albanian territories from attempts for partition by Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece, are attributed to the “*loyalty of Albanians to protect the integrity of the Ottoman Empire*”.¹¹¹⁴

In fact, there was something wrong with that. The movements against the reforms, especially those in the vilayet of Kosova and Manastir, which threatened the ethnicity of the Albanians through partitioning, were inevitably accompanied by demands for autonomy, regardless of how strongly emphasized, linking two very sensitive issues of great importance: one having to do with loyalty to the Sultan and Caliphate – of a conservative nature in the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Shkodra) - and disagreement with the Sultan, namely the demand for return of parliamentarism, which meant a departure from Islamism and a return to modern Ottomanism, which inevitably had to do with Young Turk policies.

This Albanian “*complication*”, however, turned into another internal division, into a confusion that defined currents “*for the Sultan as the only protector from the neighbors*”, which meant both standing up to the Young Turks and the Ottoman centralist state and vice versa. These issues then affected the political attitudes with consequences for the Albanian National Movement, usually turning to the cause of divisions and failures and even, as will eventually happen with the “*Albanian Alliance*”, when it remained halfway due to divisions on these grounds and as in many other cases to go as far as the August Memorandum of 1912.

This time, to avoid such divisions, which led to the weakening of the spirit of unity, but at the same time paved the way for other difficulties, the leaders of the Albanian National Movement from the ranks of the “*Istanbul Committee*”, and also from the centers abroad (Bucharest, Sofia, Vienna, Italy and elsewhere), rushed to attach political platforms to Kosovo’s developments and even speak on their behalf. This aimed to prevent the misuse by Sultan Hamid, who was always ready for such deeds and did his best to use the revolt of the Albanians and the uprisings in defense of their lands and autonomy for their own needs. Thus, a patriot, Preng Doçi, presented in Vienna a memorandum to the Austro-Hungarian government with the demands of the “*Albanian Alliance*”, maintaining an emphasis exclusively on the demands for autonomy.¹¹¹⁵

In this context, the “*Istanbul Committee*”, which at this time was reorganized under the name “*Albanian Committee*” headed by Sami Frashëri, in the spring of 1897, always referring to the activity of the “*Albanian Alliance*” of Kosovo, which had begun spreading towards Central Albania and the Vilayet of Manastir though without any internal interaction, it would come out with the manifesto “*What Albanians want*”. It backed the activity of the “*Albanian Alliance*”, which was simultaneously assigned program and political frameworks, among which were the preservation of the country’s territorial integrity and the demand for autonomy.¹¹¹⁶

The “*Istanbul Committee*” also stressed the need to fight the Sultan’s government and reconsider Albanian relations. This was a clear sign that the leaders of the National Movement

¹¹¹⁴ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 268.

¹¹¹⁵ Idem, p. 269.

¹¹¹⁶ Idem, p. 269.

had already begun to take a clear course against the policy of Sultan Hamid, even when it came to issues that meant coordination with the Sublime Porte, such as those of the country's defensive nature and Albanian ethnicity within it. Moreover, this time, there was no talk at all about the formula of Albanian autonomy under the umbrella of the Ottoman Empire, but options for an independent Albanian state instead, if the Empire would not be able to maintain its presence in the European part.

*"If Europe, the manifesto said, would continue to respect the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, then Albanians would work to secure Albania's autonomy, to unite its vilayets into a single autonomous vilayet, with Albanian as the local language and a general governor who would administer the country under the control of a national assembly with Albanian officials. If Europe were to decide to end the Ottoman Empire, then Albania would have to become a free and independent state, completely detached from it."*¹¹¹⁷

In both variants, the state building of Albania was envisioned to be done according to the democratic and advanced principles of the time. Sami Frashëri and other patriots of the "*Istanbul Committee*" thought that the most suitable system for Albania would be a republic, built in accordance with the conditions and traditions of the country.¹¹¹⁸

The demand of the "*Istanbul Committee*" to fight against the Sultan was in line with the position of the Albanian patriots already harmonized with the Young Turk Movement, some of them being its leaders. However, as will be seen, it will not be accepted in the same way in Kosova because the Hamidian regime had many supporters in the ranks of the feudal lords and old fanatical and despotic structures, which had traditionally enjoyed privileges out of fear they might lose them. They relied on the fanatical Islamist clergy, which had also come out with the frightening slogan that "*Young Turks and Albanian autonomists demanded the dissolution of Islam and the return of Christianity*".

Alongside them was the current of patriotic Albanian activists, rooted in the "*Albanian League of Prizren*", attached to its well-known patriotic definition. Although they, compared to the Sultan's supporters, who had offices, posts and wealth, were significantly fewer, and also persecuted and tortured by the regime since the formation of the Provisional Government set up by the "*Albanian League of Prizren*" in 1880. For almost a year it had extended its authority to the vilayet of Kosovo and to a part of that of Manastir, appearing as the first nucleus of the Albanian state from the time of the Arbërian state of Skanderbeg, which was violently brought down by the Ottoman invasions.

One of those who stayed firm on this commitment, remaining faithful to the "*Albanian League of Prizren*" and its state-building spirit, starting initially with an Albanian autonomy to go further, was Haxhi Zeka, who accepted the views of the Istanbul Committee. Opposite was Riza Kryeziu with many supporters, loyal to the spirit of the Sultan and the caliphate as a "shield" of the Albanians. Although, it was clear that Sultan Hamid's decree on reforms in Rumelia, as well as the peace agreement with Greece, where Crete would be lost, were contrary to the interests of the Albanians and for the benefit of the Slavic countries, the neighbors of the Albanians, who already claimed that they would use the reforms as part of their interests gradually creating "facts" for their occupation. It seems that during the Turkish-Greek war the differences between these currents will not be an obstacle for the fighting spirit of the Movement, since, as usual in such cases, the priority of defending the homeland prevailed over the rest. Even with this dedication, a good number of Albanian volunteers took part in the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire helping its victory, convinced that the loss of the Greeks at the same time meant a reduction of the threat to the southern Albanian areas targeted by Greek hegemonic claims.

¹¹¹⁷ Idem, p. 269.

¹¹¹⁸ For more information on the future state organization of Albania see Sami Frashëri: "*Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhete*" ("*Albania what was, what is and what will be*"), Bukuresht, 1899.

Following the victory of the Ottoman Empire in that war, which, although ending in autonomy of Crete, the Hamidian current quickly turned to the fulfillment of its commitments the Great Powers, using “as plain evidence” for this the suppression of the Albanian revolt against the implementation of reforms in Rumelia, as they irritated the Porte’s relations with the Slavic countries of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece.

In the face of this pressure, the Sublime Porte returned to the strategy of double stance against the Albanians: on the one hand, additional military measures to suppress their revolt, whenever inconsistent with imperial interests, and on the other hand, forging good relationships with those who were able to turn from “occasional opponents” into supporters, promising various rewards including high positions, a method used in the fight against the Provisional Government emerging from the “Albanian League of Prizren” in 1881, when Ali Pasha Guçia, Ilias Pasha Dibra and others had taken high positions the moment they signed Dervish Pasha’s statement that they were giving up on any Albanian autonomy.

Haxhi Zeka, on the other hand, made efforts so that the resistance would not be stopped without fulfilling the set conditions. They were linked to autonomy and were in full compliance with the “*Istanbul Committee*”. Meanwhile, Riza Kryeziu’s wing with co-thinkers was oriented towards the Sultan. He entered into talks with the mission sent by Sultan Hamid to Kosovo led by Is’han Bey accompanied by several imams, who propagated “*the Sultan’s determination for Albania to remain part of the Caliphate*” and threatened that without him it would quickly fall prey to its neighbors and Russia. After some talks with the Sultan’s representatives and agreeing with them, Kryeziu is invited to Istanbul and is received there by Sultan Hamid. The expression of confidence to the Sultan was conveyed by his appointment as a member of the Presidency of the Council of State, while other members of the mission were given civil and military ranks, as well as honorary titles and numerous gifts.¹¹¹⁹

The apparent “appeasement” of the movement in Kosovo, after an agreement of a part of the leaders of the “*Albanian Alliance*” to end its activity, as the Sultan, backers propagated through mosques, would protect Albanian lands, will not last long. The Sublime Porte had obligations to meet before the Great Powers, namely extinguish all the hotbeds of crisis in Kosova and elsewhere in the Albanian vilayets, especially where reforms were hampered, by which the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek minorities were constantly receiving concessions with a refrain that “*this prevented destabilization of the region*”.

At a time when the “*Istanbul Committee*” and Albanian clubs abroad were stepping up their efforts to raise demands for Albanian autonomy calling on all sides on the attention of all Albanians on this, arguing that only it could preserve peace and stability in the region and beyond than the Ottoman Empire could maintain its presence in the Balkans, the Sublime Porte came up with a “*Project for Albania*”, which said that “*the salvation of the Empire is ensured only through full centralization of Ottoman rule in the Albanian vilayets*”.

The project of “reforms” that the governors of Kosova and Mansatir, and the Minister of Interior and War presented to the Sublime Porte in March 1898, military repressive measures against rebellion and tax collection were required. Marshal Et’hem Pasha, Commander of the Ottoman military forces in Kosova, demanded that the general disarmament of Albanians be undertaken on the grounds that “*weapons were the main means of their insurgent actions*”.¹¹²⁰

In addition to disarming the Albanians, in order to prevent the formation of an autonomous Albania and secession from the Ottoman Empire, Tefik Pasha managed to deploy an army of 150,000 men in the European part of the Empire, mainly in the Albanian vilayets. This showed once again that Sultan Hamid remained faithful to the determination that the Albanian issue be given a military response. In this case, the repressive measures against the Great Powers were justified by “implementing the reforms”. From the inside, necessary actions were justified to

¹¹¹⁹ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 273.

¹¹²⁰ Idem, p. 274.

prevent the creation of an Albanian autonomy, or what the Slavic states of the Balkans and Russia already called “*Ottoman Albania*”, which had to be fought by all means.

These measures not only did not achieve the required effects, but further deepened the crisis to regional proportions. This is because the Albanians continued to resist the efforts to establish a new alliance, which, following the example of the “Albanian League of Prizren”, would lead the Albanians in the fight to protect their ethnicity, as a legitimate right in the face of danger and for establishing Albanian autonomy.

The reason for such a move was the aggravation of the Macedonian issue, made-up in late 1898 and early 1899 by Russia in accordance with its interests in the region, accompanied by the increase of interventions by the leading circles of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. Raising the Macedonian issue provoked the Albanians in many ways and rightly, as the aspirations of these states in this part directly affected the Albanian space, which, in addition to being torn apart by its neighbors, was threatened by the prevention at all costs of creating an autonomous Albanian state, which also begun to be projected by some European powers (Austria-Hungary, Italy and England), as a real and inevitable option, regardless of its extent.

Fearing a possibility that the Albanians, together with the Young Turks, would be able to overthrow the Hamidian regime, setting a different situation from that of the spheres of interest already in formation, with Albanians and their cause as the main supporters of the Young Turks movement gaining a new dimension with the creation of an autonomous Albania and, at the same time alarmed that the Balkan countries could go to war with the Ottoman Empire on the issue, the Great Powers put joint pressure against the Sublime Porte to implement reforms in Macedonia in accordance with the “Rumelia Memorandum” as submitted by Sultan Hamid. For the Great Powers, the implementation of this memorandum was of special importance, as it had to prevent Albanian autonomy, which was announced on the occasion of the establishment of the “*Albanian Assembly*” in Gjakova and Peja.

The beginning of the implementation of reforms in the Albanian vilayets, despite the promises given by the Sublime Porte to the Great Powers, was met again with a great rejection by Albanians, especially as in certain parts of the Sanjak of Dibra and Ohri began to appear the first squads of the Bulgarian *comits*, who will soon be joined by the Greek in the part of Manastir and Epirus. The comita bands were supported by Sofia and Athens aimed at creating a state of insecurity, and above all calling into question any request of the Albanians for autonomy. In the meantime, there will be Serb Chetniks appearing in the north (in the vicinity of Mitrovica and the New Pazar), calling for the “*return of Old Serbia*”.¹¹²¹

Realizing that the threat of interventions by the neighbors was becoming increasingly imminent, while the Ottoman Empire continued with other concessions to the Serb, Bulgarian and Greek minorities, turning them into protected citizens and constantly privileging them to the detriment of the Albanians, for as much as an impression was created that by doing so a different reflection of the character of the centuries-old Albanian ethnicity began to be presented in favor of the Slav-Orthodox, Albanians had no choice but to continue where they “rested”, in restoring the “*Albanian Alliance*”.

But now there was a commitment to go all the way and not succumb to the pressure of the Istanbul government on what should be sought and protected, as was the case with a formerly action by some of the feudal lords who directly supported Sultan Hamid, who kept very close and friendly relations, even though some of them had already begun to make contact with Belgrade and Cetina in case their interests were threatened by the Young Turks with frequent talks of a “joint war”, with the promise to the Albanian feudal lords of preserving their properties even after the Ottoman Empire was gone.¹¹²²

¹¹²¹ See Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*” (“*Albanian National Awakening*”), Tiranë, pp. 181-186.

¹¹²² Idem.

Patriot Haxhi Zeka will again move through different parts of the country to gain the support of all social strata, primarily the feudal lords and large influential families, but this time with the aim of really creating a broad movement, which will be of defensive character and at the same time with political demands for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

The fruit of these efforts was the convening of an Assembly, which took place in Peja on January 23-29, 1899, attended by representatives of the leaders and the population of the vilayet of Kosova. Among those attending were: Halil Hasan Pasha Begolli, Muderiz Ismaili, Muderiz Abdullah, Mufti Salih, Bajram Curri, Muderiz Mehmed Hamdiu, Mehmed Aqifi, Zenel Bey, Ali Pasha Draga from Rozhaja, Ismail Haki Pasha Tetova, Abdyl Halimi, Mehmed Sherifi, Muderiz Abdyl, Naxhi Mehmed Sulejmani, Mehmed Sherifi, Mehmed Aqifi, Mehmed Tahiri, Mehmed Murati of Senica, etc.

The assembly was attended by special representatives of the vilayets of Manastir and Janina. It declared the formation of the new Albanian League, which following the example of the League of Prizren in 1878, was called "*The League of Peja*". Haxhi Zeka was elected Presiding of the Assembly and of the Steering Committee of the League.¹¹²³

Viewed from the documents released and the way of work, "*The League of Peja*" appeared similar to "Albanian League of Prizren", although it lacked an involvement of representatives of the four Albanian vilayets. Thus, it approved a Basic Act (*Kararname*) of 11 points and the Act of Besa (*Ittifak*) of 12 points. Its main points: expression of loyalty by Albanians to the Sultan and loyalty to the Islamic religion, were identical to those of the "League of Prizren", being an inevitable slogan for building internal unity, most sought after even when it seemed impossible. Also, the Basic Act (*Kararname*) did not include the positions on Albanian autonomy or any similar form, except that the issue of governing the country with local officials was mentioned.¹¹²⁴

The Austrian Consul in Shkodra, Ippen, who followed all the developments from an internal source, reports to his government that it is about the same program as the "Albanian League of Prizren". Ippen reports that "*the dominance of the Islamic spirit*" and "*loyalty to the Sultan and Caliphate*" were notable at the assembly of Peja. Vienna was rather aware that this demonstration "*was necessary to achieve internal reconciliation*", though that did not mean that it suited the real situation, as Albanians knew what the Sultan could do for them.¹¹²⁵

Ippen's assessment of the need for internal reconciliation of Albanians, which as a protective emblem brought out "*loyalty to the Sultan and Islam*", however, in a part of European opinion, influenced by Serbian and Greek propaganda, were accepted outside a political context, sufficing for the "League of Peja" to be called a "*Muslim religious congress*".¹¹²⁶

Sultan Hamid's propaganda and that of Belgrade on this issue shared an almost common language, and it is not surprising that the success of the latter in many circles was also guaranteed.

However, it will be Faik Konica and his article in "*Albania*", which presented the "League of Peja" to the Albanian and European public in a different light. Konica called it "*a national assembly, held in Albania, where the Albanian language was discussed about the means for the protection of the Albanian land, which really had a national character and would bring as a result the strengthening of the idea of the Albanian homeland.*"¹¹²⁷

This is what Faik Konica said, which at the same time will be accompanied by a call from Dervish Hima with the title "*The way of salvation of the homeland is in swearing the Besa*",¹¹²⁸ published in Turkish so that it could be understood by all Albanian layers, which in fact had to

¹¹²³ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 273.

¹¹²⁴ Idem.

¹¹²⁵ ASAH: Ippen's letter to Goluchovskit, Shkodër, February 1899. No. 21 B.

¹¹²⁶ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 278.

¹¹²⁷ F. Konica: "*Memoire sur le mouvement nacional albanais*", pp. 15-16.

¹¹²⁸ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 278.

do with the necessity of internal Albanian unification around the project for Albanian autonomy. As it turned out, that for a number of Albanians it still remained but a slogan, rather than a unique request, due to the differences and also to the divisions arising over the already known divisions “for” and “against” loyalty to the Sultan. Belgrade had already begun to invest heavily in these disagreements. Divisions were also fueled from other directions causing an aggravation among the National Movement to the point that it often mislaid internal unity so necessary to the circumstances.

The reasons why this was the case, of course, were numerous. They should not be seen only in relation to the geographical position of the Vilayet of Kosovo and that of Manastir (the first bordering on Serbia and the second on Bulgaria and Greece) as lines of confrontation with Slavic and Greek neighbors, who as early as 1844 declared their hegemonic projects (Serbia with “*Načertanije*”, Greece with its “*Megali idea*”, and the *Bulgarian Exarchate* since 1870 onwards joining similar claims in the part of Macedonia). They should also be seen as part of the Albanian-Slavic rivalry from the early Middle Ages onwards, especially during the Byzantine period and the processes of its disintegration, when self-rule for the principalities would begin as a process that turned into rivalry and mutual warfare, especially aggravated by the 12th-14th centuries ending in Ottoman conquest.

The Ottoman occupation brought to an end the long Albanian-Slavic wars during Byzantium, consequently stabilizing the Albanian ethnicity in its historical lands. This situation lasted until Serbia gained autonomy (1830). From that time onwards, especially from 1844 when the Serbian national program “*Načertanije*” by Garašanin was announced, the Albanian parts (ancient Dardania which from the 19th century onwards, under Russian pressure, was called Kosovo, and the northern parts of the Shkodra vilayet), will be exposed to ongoing hostilities by neighboring countries, Serbia and Montenegro and their occupations, justified by the Great Powers, as happened at the Berlin Congress, when Serbia, in addition to occupations of the Toplica and of Kurshumlija regions from the Russian-Turkish war of 1877/8, were granted some more Albanian lands in the direction of Prokupla and Leskovac.¹¹²⁹

As the aspirations of neighboring countries went further aimed at devouring the entire ethnic Albanian space, the Ottoman Empire, which was not always able to militarily confront the fronts opening up in the European territories with Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks, heavily supported by Russia, which through the Slavo-Orthodox states tried to extend its influence as deeply as possible to this part, it was natural that the burden of defending “homeland” should fall on the Albanians. It was even passed on to them under the guise of “defending the Empire, Caliphate and Islam” as they said would be defending themselves in this way. This definition, therefore, needed certain privileges, which the population of the “extreme” Albanian vilayets had traditionally enjoyed, and needed further strengthening of the conservative and Islamist spirit, because it, in the name of the sacred faith, also linked more the readiness of the defense of the Empire with that of the homeland.

Sultan Hamid built a strategy of preserving the Ottoman Empire in the European part by relying mostly on the Albanian factor as the “flower of Islam”, in which case their ethnic extent will be determined by a protective role, even if exaggerated.¹¹³⁰ This will further increase the commitment of their neighbors to dually fight the Albanians: as an obstacle to their hegemonic plans and as key supporters of the Ottoman Empire.

¹¹²⁹ Jagodić, Miloš: “*Naseljevanje Kneževine Srbije 1861-1880*“, Beograd, 2004.

¹¹³⁰ See Sultan Hamit’s Imperial proclamation of 1880 addressed to “*the entire Albanian people*” (*umum Arnavudluk ahalisi*). In this document, the Sultan rejected the request for a single Albanian vilayet (consisting of four vilayets) calling it a “disturbing idea” (*fikr-i fesad*), supported by some individuals, whom he says intended “put the state in danger”. “*An autonomous Albania would serve to weaken the Ottoman state and consequently leave the Albanians defenseless against the predatory intentions of its neighbors*”. He further addressed the Albanians “as their father” and promised them full protection and support.

This role, however viewed from the point of view of imperial interests, will be decisive for the emergence of patriotic consciousness among Albanians and what will be called Albanianism. In these circumstances, the Albanian factor will be channeled in two directions:

- as a protector and tied to Islamism and Ottomanism in the service of strengthening the imperial feeling, and

- as part of the awareness towards the formation of the national identity and its expression as political Albanianism with a demand for an Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, it was natural for the “*din ve devlet*” (unity of religion and state) to be added “*homeland*”, which, despite the imperial framework with Islamism as a foundation, inevitably added a dimension of patriotism, which could not exclude what Sami Frashëri called “*special homeland*” as Albania appeared to Albanians.

On this principle began the first organization of Albanians on a national scale - with the “*Albanian League of Prizren*” in 1878.

Although at first the Ottoman Empire will not be bothered by “*Albanian League of Prizren*” as long as it manifested what appeared to be the spirit of protection of the imperial homeland, however, in further developments, it will not see it with a good eye. There will even come a time when it will be forced to oppose it, because in the new circumstances it was estimated that among Albanians, loyalty to Islam and Ottomanism and their spirit, even in feudal and fanatical structures, could be maintained in dependence on patriotism and the counter-value given to it, which in the given case, had to do with the protection of the Albanian ethnicity from partitioning by the neighbors.

This dependence, in fact, will turn into a conditional measure of the loyalty to Hamidism in Kosovo and in the vilayet of Janina and later Manastir, which, although it will never turn into a severe disconnection, not even when in 1908 under pressure from the Albanians, the Sultan will be forced to restore constitutional order and parliamentarism, it will be tested in accordance with the readiness to protect the Albanian ethnicity from neighboring invasions, but also from the concessions made to the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek populations by the Rumelia Reforms of 1896, the Macedonian Crisis and the Young Turks Revolution.

In this development the Hamidian current among Albanians, no matter how strong, will lose its power in accordance with the concessions made to the Slav-Orthodox population, seeking compensation on Albanianism, conditioning loyalty to the Ottoman Empire by its recognizing them as a nationality, their expression of ethnic and cultural identity, to be crowned with internal self-rule or something similar.

After the proclamation of reforms in Macedonia and especially after the Peace of Mursteg in 1903 and the Austro-Hungarian-Russian dictating for reforms – whereby in the three Albanian vilayets (Kosovo, Manastir, and Janina) the Ottoman Empire will lose all its main state powers: police, judiciary, and education - this change will reach such a point that loyalty to the Sultan and the Ottoman Empire even by the feudal and fanatical layers among Albanians, had to be matched by equality including the demand for autonomy.

The “*League of Peja*” (1899-1900), although not successful in achieving all that it had anticipated, however, marked a major turning point in this regard, because loyalty to the Sultan and the Ottoman Empire, no matter how great it may have been in a certain influential social stratum, and no matter how much its connection will continue due to the fear of an uncertain future, it will nevertheless be conditioned by the right of Albanians to have their cultural and political autonomy.

The moment that the Great Powers take over the implementation of reforms in Macedonia, with a few exceptions, the feudal strata and supporters of Sultan Hamid will join the current of Albanianism which supported modern Ottomanism and Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

This turn, for the prevailing circumstances, however, would be unlikely without the emergence of the “*League of Peja*” and its great mobilizing role and the challenge that all layers

of Albanian society will face, especially those who linked Albanianism to loyalty to the Sultan, loyalty which increasingly remained without a link of balance that kept it.

THE NATIONAL AWAKENING POLITICAL PROGRAM

The emergence of the “League of Peja” and the efforts of Albanians on the basis of a common platform to overcome multi-layered divisions should be viewed in connection with the spread of the scale of Albanianism among the strata with different identities, making them aware they were facing an existential challenge. At service were cultural and patriotic activities of associations, clubs and, above all, the work of the “Istanbul Committee”, involving most of the members of National Awakening, and especially patriotic centers in Bucharest, Sofia, Cairo, Vienna, the United States of America, and those of the Italian-Arbëresh. The “Istanbul Committee” already played a very important role in making Albanianism nourished with literary works in the Albanian language, textbooks, newspapers and other support needed for the national awakening, so that it would not rely solely on the fear of the consequences of the fall of the Empire, but to plan for the future even after that happened.

Since Hamidism with its concessions made to the neighbors of the Albanians had begun to turn into a factor threatening their existence, while continuing its determination to use the power of the Albanians to maintain at all costs the Ottoman presence in the Balkans, without denying that their ethnic extension legitimized the recognition of autonomy to mutual importance, the Awakening needed the great potential of opposing the Albanians, expressed through various uprisings, often unrelated or instrumentalized by the Sultan himself for his own needs, to create a clear political platform, in the form of a comprehensive demand to be raised to a national program.

In March 1899, as the “*League of Peja*” continued to spread to other towns of Albania and a general assembly was being prepared, the Society “Drita” in Bucharest, anonymously published a book by Sami Frashëri entitled: “*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*” At the same time, it emerged as a national program providing clear answers not only to the political stance of Albanians who had to hold on to the Ottoman Empire, but also to their future as a nation, seen within the European family and its civilization. Surely, the national project for a European Albania passing politically through an Ottoman Albania as a temporary creation, gained the greatest and decisive support, with which the National Movement will pass to the stage of the Young Turks Revolution and eventually that of national independence.

Sami called the formation of the “*League of Peja*” an important event expressing confidence and hope that the new League would achieve the unification of the Albanian people and would guarantee the integrity of Albanian lands.

“*This League, this meeting of this Besa (Pledge) that is taking place today in Albania will be the beginning of the salvation of Albania.*”¹¹³¹

Further, arguing the need for the extension of the new League throughout Albania and the unification of all Albanians, Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics, he said:

“*First and foremost, Albanians must pledge the great and general Besa between them and make a connection and a union, in order to cover the entire Albania.*”¹¹³²

He also urged Albanian patriots to turn the new League into an Albanian government, a permanent state body, “*to be always and everywhere given to Albanians what they want and to save Albania from danger, stay and maintain a government venue in Albania because the Turkish government is not a government of construction, but rather of destruction*”; therefore,

¹¹³¹ Frashëri, Sami: “*Shqipëria ç’ka qenë, ç’është e ç’do të bëhetë?*”, Bukuresht, 1899, p. 4.

¹¹³² Idem, p. 4.

*“The League of Albanians should take its place and fulfill by itself or force the Turkish government to meet the requirements of the Albanian movement.”*¹¹³³

Sami determined the organizational structure of the new Albanian League: in each sanjak a permanent council would be established, constituting the local body of the League, while in its capital would be placed the General Council, which would convene once a year or whenever needed. This would be the central legislative body of the Albanian League from which a General Council would be elected, playing the role of the highest executive body of the League, or of an Albanian government.¹¹³⁴

The platform of the *“New Albanian League”*, as announced by the main ideologue of the National Awakening, Sami Frashëri, in his work *“Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?”* as well as a growing readiness of Albanians, even supporters of the Sultan from the ranks of feudal lords and chieftains, pushed the Sublime Porte to issue a ban for the convening of the General Assembly of Albanians, scheduled to be held at the end of May 1899, although it will not stop their determination to move in the right direction, even compulsorily, as the trust in the Sublime Porte was on the fall, as the risk of their lands being swallowed by the invasions of neighbors increased, which also increased the necessity of joint protective action of all the forces, regardless of orientations.

The Sublime Porte therefore feared the *“New Albanian League”* with a national platform, such as that of Sami, because in the face of circumstances that could no longer hide the developments leading to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it gave a definite answer to two questions that had been accompanying Albanians for long nurturing their confusion and even causing divisions on which Sultan Hamid had often manipulated Albanians and their uprisings:

- a) that they had to fight (act) to secede from the Ottoman Empire, and
- b) that they had to fight (act) for the formation of an independent Albanian state, as the only way to save the Albanian nation and Albania from partitioning.

The first issue was justified by the fact that *“Turkey in Europe has a very short life. Albania has neither laid its foundations nor taken root in itself; it lives on the ruined foundations of Turkey and its decaying roots. With the fall of this great storm, Albania will also fall and will be crushed under its heavy ruins...”*¹¹³⁵

If Albania continued to remain under the Ottoman Empire, divided into four common vilayets, without any special rights, and if Albanians continued to tolerate Turkish tyranny, they would not rise up to demands for their national rights to be freed from captivity, they will be identified with the Turks.¹¹³⁶ In this case, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, Albania could be treated as part of the Ottoman heritage, as an object to be divided between monarchies, and as a result would be torn down along with the Empire.

In order to overcome these two threats, Sami stressed that it was necessary for all Albanians to fight against Ottoman rule and that this war should be crowned with secession from the Ottoman Empire *“in order to avoid destruction and the catastrophe that this Empire is heading for.”*¹¹³⁷

Samiu assessed that its collapse should find Albania organized in a separate state with its own government. He said that *“it is the first duty of the Albanians to demand from the Sultan and the European states to separate Albania from the Turkish trunk, so that Albania is separated without delay and make it plain what its borders are and how far it goes. Let them recognize our country as Albania, let Europe recognize it as Albania.”*¹¹³⁸

¹¹³³ Idem, p. 5.

¹¹³⁴ Idem, p. 5.

¹¹³⁵ Idem, p. 6.

¹¹³⁶ *“Historia e popullit shqiptar”*, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 291.

¹¹³⁷ Frashëri, Sami: *“Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhetë?”*, Bukuresht, 1899, p. 34.

¹¹³⁸ Idem, p. 35.

Even the issue dealing with the formation of an autonomous government within the Ottoman Empire, was justified by the possibility of secession, as something that was inevitable.

*“This Albanian government should be under Turkey for the present, but in a way that if Turkey is to fall, Albania may as it stand on its own.”*¹¹³⁹

Both the first and the second issue, Sami saw as politically feasible, though also through war.

“Albanians should take what they by force, demand them by words, even if they have a loaded gun,” he said. *“Turkey gives up nothing with love for goodness, never gives anything away... Albanians are capable of protecting and demanding their rights even with weapons in hand. When what is right is supported by power, it turns into a force to which nothing can stand on its way.”*¹¹⁴⁰

Not excluding war and its means - but that they should always be guided by the pen, that is, by intellectual and political programs, and guided by them - Sami partially gives up the evolutionary attitude which he defended years before and as he reveals it to Jeronim De Rada himself in a letter.¹¹⁴¹

When it comes to the correspondence with De Rada, however, it is worth mentioning an answer that Sami gave to the great Arbëresh writer in 1881 on the occasion of his recommendation that Albania be organized as a confederate state divided into three units according to their faiths, a plan that for Sami was neither good nor feasible. In the first place, Sami thought that the Albanians did not want to be divided but rather more united. Secondly, Albania was not divided by religion, and Albanians of different religions did not live in separate areas but mixed with each other, except in the south where there were no Catholics. There were tribes consisting of Christians and Muslims, and a Christian felt closer to a Muslim of the same tribe than to a Christian of another origin.

“Despite efforts by foreigners, Turks, Greeks and Slavs to divide the Albanians, the brotherhood between them was never broken,” Samiu wrote. *“Therefore, any division between Albanians due to religion should not be allowed.”*¹¹⁴²

The issue of faith and its complexity, in the work *“Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?”* will also be approached with the same responsibility and always on the positioning that religion did not divide Albanians, and that the very presence of the three faiths, within them, was best proof for this.

*“Religions had to be left to the church and the mosque, and all Albanians had to become brothers as nature had ordained them and as they had been since ancient times.”*¹¹⁴³

In this way, Sami gives the best answer to one of the issues that Albanians will have more difficulty with coming from outside rather than inside, especially when intentionally describing them as scattered on religious grounds and not united on the basis of national identity, which stood above religion and best proof for this was the National Awakening when Albanianism will be declared as the religion of the Albanians.

The appearance of the work *“Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?”*, although published anonymously at the first edition of Bucharest, will soon be known as being written by Sami Frashëri, a patriot, writer, philosopher and Ottoman and Albanian philologist among the greatest of the time, while in reprint and in the German translation it will come out with the author’s name.¹¹⁴⁴

The Ottoman government placed him under house arrest and kept him under constant surveillance. He was not sued because fearing that such an authority of large Ottoman and

¹¹³⁹ Idem, p. 35.

¹¹⁴⁰ Idem, p. 36.

¹¹⁴¹ See Sami Frashëri’s korrespondence with Jeronim de Rada in *“Buletini për Shkenecat Shoqërore”*, II, Tiranë, 1954, pp. 114-118.

¹¹⁴² Skëndi, Stavro: *“Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar”*, Tiranë, 2000, p. 160.

¹¹⁴³ *“Buletini për Shkenecat Shoqërore”*, II, Tiranë, 1954, pp. 114-118.

¹¹⁴⁴ Sami, Semsettin: *“Was war Albanien, was ist es, was wird werden”*, Vienna, 1913.

Albanian proportions, such as Sami, so deserving of the Turkish language and Ottoman nationalism, serving as a bridge between the peoples of the Ottoman Empire and Islamism that held them together, would have given the Albanian question such important dimensions on which the future of the Ottoman Empire depended - if it accepted the formation of Ottoman Albania, or its collapse - if it refused.

Sami Frashëri died four years later (1904), isolated and locked, but his works and ideas will find their way to penetration wherever the Albanian world stretched. He became a guide of one of the greatest projects of the Albanian mindset of all time, nurturing its national consciousness with ideas and visions on which Albanians found their way to national unity and independence.

The Ottoman Empire, and personally Sultan Hamid, knew of Sami Frashëri's earlier positions, whether in the "*Dictionary of Encyclopedic Words*", "*Kamus al-Al'am*" (1889-99) in six volumes, "*Islamic Civilization*" (*Medendieyet-i Islamiyye*), "*The Human Being*" (*Insan*), "*Women*" (*Kadinlar*), "*The Turkish Dictionary*" in two volumes, and other works. As a linguist and scientist of a high format, in addition to expressing his position on Ottoman civilization, Islam and civilization in general, he also expressed his position on Albanians as a people and their historical antiquity, seeing them as part of Western civilization, constantly emphasizing the character of historical ties with the east, especially with Islam and the consequences, which he views on a positive sense.

Addressing the history of Albanians from this point of view, as a Turkologist and Ottomanist at the same time, Sami Frashëri created the platform for extracting Albanians from being treated as an *Ottoman-Millet*, where it was vehemently included and left for centuries, to carry it to an independent nation (*kavma*), which had to be accepted politically as such to enjoy the right to autonomy.

From this point of view, Sami tried to see Albanianism and Islamism in a conciliatory and interactive line even in the circumstances when the unity of religion with the state did not hinder cultural or ethnic pluralism, but rather serving the common state framework. As a supporter of Islam, Sami accepted the merits of Islam and its role, though at the same time defended the national identity, which lay above the religious one.

*"The Albanian, as a Muslim believer, remains Albanian, just as he remains a Christian."*¹¹⁴⁵

This was the biggest clarification ever made about the assessment between national and religious identity, a clarification that served Albanianism not only to be placed on the rails of a historical alignment, but also to create a political platform in extremely complicated circumstances when Albanians were being denied the right to cultural and national identity and hence the right to self-rule on these grounds, as it recognized to other non-Muslim peoples.

Sami's work in this sense was major, as it came out to affirm Albanianism by not confronting it with Islamism and Ottomanism, though distinguishing it as a "special identity" within an identity he calls "*common*" and he was associated with the homeland. imperial, one as a unifying formula for the circumstances, which could serve the Albanians to link the cultural and ethnic identity with the political one without confronting the religious one, where they appeared divided as Muslims and Christians with the faith being determinant.

With his play "*Besa*" and numerous journalistic articles published in Turkish newspapers "*Tercümen-i Hakikat*" (*Interpreter of Truth*) and those that he will direct himself in Turkish and Albanian, he will for the first time bring out the *Albanian context* within the imperial one by clearly explaining the relations between *state* and *nation* (*dovlet ve millet*) as well as their interrelationship.

¹¹⁴⁵ Frashëri, Sami: "*Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është dhe ç'do të bëhet?*", Bukuresht, 1899, p. 35.

In the “*Tercümen-i Hakikat*” newspaper, as early as December 1878, he will identify himself as someone for whom “*Albania (is) my special homeland*” to justify this by saying that, “*For a man nothing stands higher than motherland (vatan) and race (cinsiyet).*”

In the “*Sabah*” newspaper, replying that the word “Muslim” and the word “Albanian” were not synonymous, as all Albanians were not Muslims and not all Muslims were Albanians, explains that “*if religion has a great impact, above all in the East, race is more important than religion,*” adding that “*as regards the term ‘Albanian’, it is not only a part of the terminology of modern geography, but also is of a great importance to the Ottoman Empire.*”¹¹⁴⁶

In line with these and other similar attitudes that he expressed on the press of the time in Turkish, Sami will try to save the Albanians from keeping their bridges with Ottomanism, being aware that they needed the Ottoman Empire for a while, as it I also needed an autonomous (Ottoman) Albania.

He saw the transitional period as particularly useful for Albanians, who, in the twists and turns of time, had to take advantage of it in order to clarify themselves from the point of view of identity from within, but also in relation to others, especially Islamism and Ottomanism. Therefore, in his writings of the time after taking charge of the “Istanbul Committee” (1879-1889), always wishing Albanians to reach a level of a political maturity through social awareness to find a common language with the Ottoman Empire, demanding internal autonomy for the Albanians in line with their ethnic and cultural extent.

In the same writings, Sami demanded prudence from the Albanians and responsible behavior, since the neighbors (Serbs and Greeks) posed two threats at the same time: military and cultural, as they also were a threat to the Ottoman Empire.

He tried to explain the Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire as an Ottoman interest being a pillar of support for Ottoman rule in the Balkans, as he tried to see the cultural emancipation of Albanians as an imperial interest. Only in this way would Albanians be able to give the right answer to Slavism and Hellenism, which, due to a good part of Albanians left outside national education, had begun to assimilate them (thinking about Albanians of the Orthodox and Catholic faith) and on this basis to raise their hegemonic claims on the Albanian ethnicity.

However, Sami Frashëri in “*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*”, representing in many ways a national program, in addition to moving away from his previous views requiring in some way interaction with the Ottoman Empire - and this could be explained by Sami’s hope that Sultan Hamid, whose supporter he was at the beginning, would change his policy towards the Albanians by accepting them as a nation and giving them autonomy, that is, to give it up, as the Empire too would not last long - demanding that in case of need war had to be resorted to so that Albania is not treated as part of the Ottoman heritage, because it could get swallowed up along with it. On this occasion, he showed the Albanians and Albania the way to Europe and Western civilization. Not coincidentally, he even said every effort should be made for Europe to recognize and understand Albania in order to accept it.¹¹⁴⁷

In fact, many Albanians educated at home and abroad, especially those who studied in major European cities, inevitably coming in contact with Albanianism, who already studied in Europe, had their eyes on Europe when the Ottoman Empire had its days numbered, in various ways, from Albanian associations and clubs to newspapers, felt the spirit in Vienna, Brussels, Rome and Paris. Yet, for Albanians of the Muslim faith, who had embraced Albanianism greatly, European identity was linked to their intention to legitimize their stay in their territories as the Ottoman Empire was forced to withdraw from the Balkans.¹¹⁴⁸

¹¹⁴⁶ Clayer, Nathalie: “*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 253.

¹¹⁴⁷ Frashëri, Sami: “*Shqipëria ç’ka qenë, ç’është dhe ç’do të bëhet?*”, Bukuresht, 1899, p. 35.

¹¹⁴⁸ Idem.

So, “*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*”, will give special impetus to the search for European identity directly affecting the transformation of Albanian nationalism to move from a stage of internal identity mobilization to political programs with a clear platform based on the demand for an autonomous Albanian state (as temporary) and secession from the Ottoman Empire.

With his work “*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*”, Sami Frashëri as an idealist will provide a most powerful program platform for Albanian nationalism on which it will be based. However, it will be the diplomat and politician Ismail Qemali who will design it from a diplomatic and political point of view to the extent of practical implementation, mostly bringing it in line with events and developments and using them. Therefore, it is no coincidence that history will burden him with the responsibility of declaring Albania’s independence in turbulent and equally dangerous circumstances when even the slightest fluctuation would have tragic consequences for Albanians.

Ismail Qemali, like many other Albanians who joined Albanianism remaining forever faithful, even in the circumstances when forced to make great and painful compromises, belonged to the intellectual elite coming from the Albanian aristocratic layer locked up in the ranks of the high hierarchy of the Ottoman state. Born in Vlora on May 24, 1844 in the Sinanaj family, known as a big landowner, after graduating from primary school in his hometown and the “Zosimea” gymnasium in Janina, moved to Istanbul in 1859. Here he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a translator, at the same time pursuing higher studies in law.¹¹⁴⁹ He began his long career as a politician, participating in all the fractures and twists and turns that the Ottoman Empire would go through from parliamentarism, his suppression by Sultan Hamid, the Young Turks Revolution and the Balkan wars, ending with military defeat and also with the declaration of independence of Albania.

However, his long political and diplomatic career in the Ottoman Empire bears the seal of a commitment on two extremely important issues: efforts to reform it, to turn it into a modern state, and efforts made by Albanians as a nation inside its to gain an autonomy status.

The latter, however, is related to the efforts made in Istanbul in 1864 and 1867 to compile a common alphabet for the Albanian language and to form an Albanian cultural society. Ismail Qemali spoke out against the use of the Arabic alphabet for the Albanian language and joined Pashko Vasa, Kostandin Kristoforidhi and other intellectuals to support a Latin alphabet.¹¹⁵⁰

From this time on, Ismail Qemali will be mostly associated with national activity, though never separated from being an active Ottoman politician, whether in position or in opposition, at home or abroad. Even when he finds himself in the service of the Ottoman Empire, as its governor in remote provinces and lastly in Tripoli (1900), from where he fled to Europe, Ismail Qemali tried to use the authority of the former in favor of the latter. Meanwhile, after the downfall of Sultan Hamid’s absolute rule and his return to the Ottoman Parliament as a deputy with the mandate of Vlora, as part of liberal opposition, Ismail Qemali necessarily turns into a leader of the National Movement, as imposed by the circumstances prevailing after the start of a deep conflict between the Albanians and the Young Turks. He will try to balance this role politically so that the demands of the Albanians for the status of the nation and autonomy within the Ottoman Empire are in line with the spirit of the imperial reforms deriving from international commitments, especially Paragraph 23 of the decisions of the Congress of Berlin.

In view of the demand for autonomy as a transitional solution, always referring to the possibility of breaking the *status quo*, Ismail Qemali will not rule out other forms, such as a federation with the Greeks, or a protectorate of the great powers. Though, despite the “variants” of a political and diplomatic nature, Ismail Qemali will in principle remain loyal to the position

¹¹⁴⁹ More about the life and work of Ismail Qemali and his diplomatic, political activity in the service of the Ottoman Empire and patriotic activity for the benefit of Albanianism, see “*The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*”, London, 1920, published in Albanian as “*Kujtime*”, Tiranë, 1997.

¹¹⁵⁰ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 293.

of Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire defending it until the beginning of the First Balkan War. Evidently, he renounced it only when the Balkan Allies won the war against the Ottoman Empire and their armies invaded Albania and the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Berthold told him in a meeting in Bucharest on November 17, 1912 that for Albanians the time of autonomy was over and the time of efforts for an independent ethnic state began.

This political stance, however, was based on the platform emerging from Sami Frashëri's national ideology, laid out in his work "*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*" and accepted by the entire National Movement. It can even be said that Ismail Qemali, regardless of the political and diplomatic language he used in accordance with certain situations, followed the basic lines on which Sami Frashëri focused, such as the creation of an Albanian state, even as autonomous, and the return of Albania towards European civilization.

Promoting the Albanian platform in accordance with the frameworks set by Sami Frashëri, Ismail Qemali will start taking the lead after he escaped from Turkey in April 1900, crossing first to Athens and from there to Naples, Rome, Lausanne, Paris, and Brussels to settle in London, where he stayed for several years. His journey will actually open the first and most active phase of the diplomatic efforts of the Albanian National Movement to spread its voice competently through the decision-making political and diplomatic centers through a high authority such as Ismail Qemali, presented to the Great Powers as an insurmountable reference, being at the same time a high-ranking Ottoman politician of the opposition, such as the Young Turks, who had their headquarters in Paris. He tried to present the Albanian autonomy and their cultural and educational emancipation in the framework of the reforms that the Ottoman Empire had to make in order to be strengthened in accordance with the commitments it had received from the Great Powers since the Tanzimat reforms, though suffocated by the despotic regime of Sultan Hamid.

Ismail Qemali revealed the political program for the Albanian National Movement for the first time in public in an interview with the well-known Italian newspaper "La Tribuna", on May 21, 1900, when he was still in Rome, revealing it as part of imperial reforms. This will have a great resounding. The Italian newspaper, in the accompanying comment, gives a positive note to the project, calling Ismail Qemali "*a sincere benefactor of the Ottoman Empire and moderate spokesperson of the Albanian cause*". About him, it says: "*He does not see the solution of the Albanian issue in separation from the Empire, but in a political autonomy, which would be achieved in cooperation with it*", emphasizing that "it strengthens it". On October 15 of the same year he published in the magazine "*Albania*" the call "*To Albanian Brothers*", where the main attitudes of the national program were highlighted.

In both these documents, Ismail Qemali presented, as an urgent, just and important demand - the recognition of the Albanian nationality "*as a nation and a community in Shkodra, Kosovo, Mansatir and Janina, and beyond in other parts of European Turkey.*"¹¹⁵¹

Ismail Qemali further explains, speaking on behalf of the Albanians that "*we only want unification and unity of our Albanian race, its intellectual and economic progress in order to become strong enough to oppose aims to be devoured*", to round up this articulation by European affiliation, which as he put it "*in its blood have always remained European.*"¹¹⁵²

Along with the European affiliation of Albanians and its civilization, which was the essence of the national platform of Albanians expressed by Sami Frashëri in his work "*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*", Ismail Qemali will pay due attention to the aspect of Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire as well as the emancipatory demands of the Albanians, so that, as he says, they are able to "*self-command (self-govern) as well as possible.*"

Referring to Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty, Ismail Qemali demanded that Albania be granted the status given to Crete in 1897 due to an intervention of the great European powers. Taking care not to contradict the spirit of the status quo, and risking exclusion from the political

¹¹⁵¹ Idem, p. 296.

¹¹⁵² Idem, p. 296.

process, he said that he did not support the secession of Albania from the Ottoman Empire, but demanded such an organization, where the right of Albanians for autonomy.¹¹⁵³

The Italian newspaper expressed the desire of the Albanians to have the best possible relations with the Greeks, Italians and the neighbors, as that would be in the interest of all. In this case, he even mentioned a Greek-Albanian agreement, arguing that “*understanding between Greeks and Albanians must be based on their parallel development within their national spheres.*”¹¹⁵⁴

On the occasion, he would be in favor of the *status quo*, but he could not understand that without reforms, which could reduce the potential of the crisis.

Ismail Qemali expressed these same views in the newspaper “*Selamet*” (Salvation) in Turkish, Greek and Albanian. On this occasion, too, he defended the interests of the Albanian people, which he found in some respects identical to the interests of the Greeks.¹¹⁵⁵

Because of this identification of interests (with the Greeks), he was viewed with great suspicion by many Albanian patriots of the time. Some of them went so far as to call him a tool of Greek politics. One of them was Faik Konica. He strongly opposed his pro-Greek policy, which he saw as detrimental to the Albanian cause.¹¹⁵⁶

Such disbeliefs accompanying Ismail Qemali were less a matter of fluctuations in political attitudes, emerging from the national platform based on the work of Sami Frashëri and his ideology, and more of the nature of diplomatic behavior in particular circumstances, implying different nuances in accordance with the maxim that politics represents the art of the possible even when the impossible was required. This was even necessary for an important personality like Ismail Qemali, who, among other things, had the task, in the face of the very complex situations he was going through, of testing the possibilities for Albanians to put their cards into play. even with the risk that in some cases they would be burned, as will happen to the Greek and later to the Italian cards remaining in the end only with the Austro-Hungarian card to play with, which was crucial for Albania to declare its National independence.

But how will the Great Powers react to a political program of Albanians, which linked the ideology of Sami Frashëri and the diplomacy of Ismail Qemali to the realization of its main parameters: the recognition of Albanians as a nation and the acceptance of political autonomy, which should to be achieved through political and diplomatic means while withstanding internal opposition from the Ottoman Empire, which seemed almost unbearable?

In the face of this great dilemma, Ismail Qemali’s dual role: as an Ottoman politician and as an Albanian Revivalist at the same time, rightly raised doubts about a political dilemma that could, for tactical and strategic reasons, align Sultan Hamid’s refusal to address the issue of Albanian autonomy with the determination of the Albanians to preserve the Empire based on that condition.

This facet, however speculative, will affect a further deepening of the Balkan crisis, as the neighbors of the Albanians (Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians) were already at a stage when they were subject to increasingly open plans to devour Albania. While some of the major European powers, primarily Austria-Hungary, in the name of preventing this development, will also come up with various plans on how to proceed in this case, where, as will be seen, under the mat will be different variants elaborated about the future of Albania and its status from an autonomy monitored by the Great Powers to its annexation?

Many other questions may be asked here, but none of them could escape the assessment that the Albanian political program could temporarily keep the Albanians in the Ottoman Empire, turning them into a war polygon, as will happen a little later in the case of the outbreak

¹¹⁵³ Idem, p. 296.

¹¹⁵⁴ See Ismail Qemali’s long interview with Lalis Paternostro at “*La Tribuna*”, 27 July 1907, cited according to S. Skëndo: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 200-, p. 173.

¹¹⁵⁵ See “*Kujtime*” by Ismail Qemal Vlora, published in Tirana, 1997, pp. 229-249.

¹¹⁵⁶ Albania, VII (1902).

of the First Balkan War, but it could not stop them from finding their place in the European political and state scene, no matter what difficulties they would go through, because the historical circumstances and spheres of interest necessarily forced an answer to this question, even if it was unfair.

CHAPTER SIX GREAT POWERS AND THE FOREPLAY TO THE BALKAN WARS

MACEDONIAN CRISIS AS A HEGEMONIC RUSSIAN-SLAVIC SCENARIO

Initially, it may be said that the Great Powers, including Russia, were aware of the Albanian issue becoming increasingly imperative, regardless of how much and how they had been dealing with it. The Great Powers, possibly Russia, also knew it needed an answer, no matter how it would look like, despite the fact that getting it out of an almost vicious circle, with contradicting interests, both of the neighboring countries as well as of the Albanians, it required a “magic formula”. Even when it happened being bypassed by “principled formulations” approved by the Berlin Congress of 1878, by which the Ottoman Empire was charged with carrying out internal reforms for the benefit of the European peoples (especially Christians), the Great Powers will increasingly be convinced that the Albanian factor was turning into a powerful catalyst that nurtured the international crisis equally when ignored or regarded.

Aware of this inevitable fact, they will try to keep it as long as possible under the treatment of “inviolability”, allowing for a *status quo* therapy, which never lasts long. But this allowed them space for plans, which could turn it into a “trigger” for certain purposes, such as those for annexation to partition, among which were the projects of various compromises (of an autonomous state and similar scenarios). However, this highlighted an existing interest for it that made it clear that this issue could not be permanently removed from the agenda by its extinction - as its neighbors (Serbs, Greeks, Montenegrins) claimed, nor by giving a half-answer or by delaying it as long as possible - as some of the Great Powers liked.

It was precisely the nurturing discourse of the Balkan and European crisis, both when it was taken into account and when disregarded that made the Albanian issue even more complex and at the same time even more dangerous. Because, it was already the Albanians themselves who, with their demands for political autonomy, were moving things from within. Although this did not undermine the *status quo* imposed from outside, nevertheless it directly affected external factors, primarily neighboring countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria), to take action to prevent this development, even with the threat of war with the Ottoman Empire, as actually happened in the autumn of 1912. Thus, the demands of the Albanians for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, which became increasingly dominant as the opposition movement against Sultan Hamid strengthened, where the Albanians played an important role, perhaps decisive in the overthrow of his despotism in the summer of 1908, and the preparations of the Albanian neighbors to prevent this, even by means of war, would pave the way for the rivalries of the Great Powers in this development, be it visible or invisible. These rivalries, however, will be of contradicting nature. Among the supporters of the Albanians (Austria-Hungary and Italy) - a political, cultural and economic nature prevailed. And, among the opponents of the Albanians (Serbs, Malaysians, Greeks and Bulgarians), mostly an occupying nature ruled.

With this in mind, it clearly depicts a difference between the long-term Austrian and later Italian rivalry, based on a missionary care for the Albanian population of the Catholic faith, which extended to the broad cultural and emancipatory plan of the Albanians and, in many

respects, consistent with the program of the National Awakening, and that coming against Albanians first from Greece and later also from Serbia and Montenegro, which was of a purely hegemonic nature. Even, as mentioned earlier, the Austro-Italian rivalry against Albanians and in Albania, in many respects, will help the Albanian national awakening to mobilize its emancipatory and political definitions in general. Meanwhile, the neighbors of the Albanians, Serbs and Greeks, will start their national movements by announcing their national programs on hegemonic bases (Serbs with “*Načertanije*” and Greeks with “*Megali idea*”), which provided for the disappearance of the Albanian issue. .

The appearance of Serbian and Greek programs will also have their “good” side effect, as it made Albanians, in order to escape being gulped by their neighbors, think about their own fate and future in the circumstances when for them only insecurity was certain, with that too being an impetus for their national awakening before it was too late.

In the face of these challenges, even when it seemed that the neighbors’ interest in them was related to their support to join the anti-Ottoman movement, it would be seen that it was all about exploiting the Ottoman Empire to weaken it, so that then the Serbs and Greeks, would take advantage of the clash between the Albanians and the Ottomans so that after they were weak enough could more easily turn into their prey.

Led by this strategy, Serbia and Montenegro will deploy some weapons in the northern parts of the Shkodra Vilayet and northern Kosovo. On this occasion, they will conclude special agreements with some of the feudal lords and bayraktars of these areas, such as those with Isa Boletini and others, to protect the property of Serbs and those of monasteries, though they will do their best to have supervision on their uprisings against the Ottomans.¹¹⁵⁷

Of course, in this reckoning with the Albanian feudal lords, Belgrade and Cetina tried to sell themselves as being their friends and protectors, even promising that their faith (religion) or traditions would not be affected, just as they properties would not be affected.

In this strategy, the Greeks appear much more perfidious than the Serbs, because they will use the Hellenistic movement to gaining many of the Albanians around their idea, especially the powerful Arvanitas factor and the Albanians of the Orthodox faith, who, after the failure of Ali Pasha Tepelena’s struggle to get independence for the Pashalik of Janina from the Ottoman Empire in 1820-22, will put all their energy to turn it into the service of the war for the independence of Greece, which was achieved in 1830. The Greeks will follow this same path from the time of the Eastern Crisis onwards, when they will make efforts to further gain over the Orthodox Albanians and the Arvanites already included in the Greek state for their own purposes, enticing them into linking the war against the Ottoman Empire to some common political goals, such as those emerging during the first talks between Abdyl Frashëri and Mehmed Ali Vrioni with the Greek Prime Minister in 1878 during the Ottoman-Russian war when a Greek alliance was mentioned, which Albanians saw as an opportunity for an Albanian-Greek federal state. This will be rejected by the Greeks for fear that in such a state of two identity units, the Albanians would appear as a majority, while the Greeks would remain a minority, as they really were, and as they would remain if it were not for Hellenization of the Arvanites and of the Orthodox Albanians, which they will put into action since the founding of the Greek state.

In fact, genuine Hellenism as a cultural movement beyond Hellenism as a political method for the assimilation of Albanians of the Orthodox faith will be supported by many Arvanitas intellectuals, Albanians of the Orthodox faith and Italo-Arbëresh, who thought that Hellenism

¹¹⁵⁷ More about the cooperation of some Albanian feudal lords from Kosovo with the Serbs as well as their supply of weapons and some unilateral agreements with them before and during the uprisings of 1908-1912, mostly about Isa Boletini, see Perunović, Branko: “*Pisma srpskih konzula iz Prištine 1890-1900*”, Beograd, 1985, pp. 366-368; Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, monograph, Prishtinë, 1990; Cana, Zekeria: “*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovës 1908-1912*”, Prishtinë, 1979; Zavalani, Tajar: “*Historia e Shqipnisë*”, Tiranë, 1998; Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000; Clayer, Nathanie: “*Në fillim të nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009; Jacques, Edwin: “*Shqiptarët*”, 1995; Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, 2007.

could be exploited so that Albanians should also be involved in joint projects with the Greeks to be liberated from the Ottoman Empire.

In the early nineteenth century there will be various efforts and initiatives. They will continue even later till the eve of the Balkan wars. But the emergence of “*Megali idea*” (the Greek national program) of 1844 will block the way for sincere projects of the two peoples for joint actions, in order to give way to Greek hegemony over the Albanians. It will turn into a stable political program of the Greek state from its establishment onwards to continue at all stages, including here the backstages conjured up by Athens against the Albanian state and the Albanian cause in general.

In the new circumstances, however, when the Albanian national movement already appeared with a clear political program, based on Sami Frashëri’s manifesto of “*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*”, while even the Italo-Arbëresh and Albanian Diaspora in Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt and elsewhere, through their great work, had already found their deserved place in this national movement among the most powerful that had ever been seen, will significantly change the behavior of the Albanians’ neighbors towards these developments. They will focus on pressuring the Ottoman Empire to carry out reforms in the European part, mainly for the benefit of the Christian population (Serbs and Bulgarians) - which directly provoked Albanians to react in double quality (as opponents) of reforms and opponents of the Ottoman Empire) – while using the Macedonian cause to the detriment of any option of Albanian autonomy, which would be reflected in the unification of the four Albanian vilayets into one (that of Shkodra, Kosova, Manastir and Janina). So from the Greek-Ottoman War of 1896/7 to the Young Turks Revolution of 1908, all attention will be focused on the issue of Macedonia, where the key to holding the Ottoman Empire was already under constant pressure from within and outside any possibility to accept the demands of the Albanians. Meanwhile, with the threat of an intervention by the Balkan countries in the crisis (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) - which meant breaking the *status quo* through a war that these countries would ignite with the Ottoman Empire – it was Russia that, in a way, kept the threads of this development and even determined the dynamics of many events, if not the epilogue.

Since Russia was also aware that the overuse of the Balkan Slav-Orthodox states could put the countries of the Trilateral Alliance (Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy) into action for any direct intervention in the Balkans, which could be further exploited by the behavior of the Albanians by trying to separate the Austro-Hungarian interest from the Italian one, raising it to a “special interest” between Vienna and St. Petersburg in accordance with the agreement of 1881 recognizing each other’s positions in the Balkans (including Germany) and pledging that any change in the Ottoman Empire’s territorial *status quo* in Europe would be through a joint agreement between them.¹¹⁵⁸

But the Ottoman-Greek war for Crete (1896/7) and its known consequences brought things out of this context. This worried both Austria-Hungary and Russia, who feared that it would expand beyond their control bringing other factors at stake that could change the content of the Austro-Russian agreements on the mandate for oversight but also an answer that had to be given to the Albanian question appearing inevitable (in the circumstances of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire), which according to the attitude of St. Petersburg in 1881, had to be resolved by an agreement between these two empires. This would lead to coinciding with the *half-and-half* “reconciliation” formula, where the maximalist demands of the Albanians for the unification of the four vilayets met and also the demands of the Serbs, the Greeks and the Bulgarians, for the swallowing of the Albanian space and the complete extinction of the Albanian cause in line with their hegemonic projects.

¹¹⁵⁸ See Item II of treaty of A. F. Pribram: “*The Secret Treaties of Austro-Hungary 1879-1914*”, Cambridge, Mass, 1920, I, 39, according to Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 265.

The Austrian-Russian “half-and-half” formula was announced in April 1897, at a meeting between Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Galuhovsky and Russian Foreign Minister Muraviev. The top diplomats of these countries, taking into account the vital interests of both empires and aiming to avoid “*the risk of a destructive rivalry for peace in Europe*”, agreed on certain arrangements in case the *status quo* in the Balkans could not be saved.¹¹⁵⁹

In a note dated May 8, 1897, Vienna was in favor of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Novi Pazar sanjak, though stating that it was in favor of the creation of an independent Albanian state “with the exception of any foreign rule, to extend from Janina to Shkodra”,¹¹⁶⁰ with enough space on east side. In this letter, Vienna also stated that it was in favor of partitioning of the Ottoman territories in the peninsula among the various Balkan states.

Russia’s response did not contradict Vienna’s proposals, except that for Albania’s independence from Janina to Shkodra it stated that, “*since these issues belonged to the future, it was difficult to make decisions now.*”¹¹⁶¹

This had to be accepted rather as Russia’s diplomatic stance to reassure Italy than to disagree with the Austro-Hungarian plans on Albania and the Albanians, which, in various forms, would continue to remain in the files of these two powers, without considering how and to what extent they would be reflected in the Austro-Hungarian rivalry with Italy and on Russia’s relations with its satellite states in the Balkans: Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, including also the impact it would have against Greece, although it will be accepted as a French and partly British interest.

However, in the field of global European policy, the agreement in principle between Austria-Hungary and Russia on the Albanian issue and the overall issue of the fate of the European part of the Ottoman Empire if the *status quo* were broken, would fuel regional rivalries between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, which, although focused on Macedonia and its issue, will affect other factors outside the Balkans, with the rest of European powers, especially Great Britain and Germany, inevitably set in motion.

These countries, although not directly related to the interests in the Balkans, could not remain silent when these seemingly “local” rivalries that could turn into triggers for next troubles, such as those between Serbia and Bulgaria, Greece and Bulgaria, or even those of Montenegro as a new Italian card and similar, referring to Macedonia and its case, as a new crisis hotbed, where anyone could use their own cards and insert them into the game, as it will actually happen, but now with the risk of mutual confrontations with things possibly getting out of control threatening overall stability.

In this development several other moments followed affecting the Balkan poker game and generally the eastern policy of the Great Powers, implicating Great Britain and Germany in a rivalry of different interests, with the Germans by joining Austria-Hungary and Russia seeking the stability of the Ottoman Empire as that ensured them expansion deeper economic cooperation with the Sublime Porte. While, on the other hand, the UK did not like this and rather sought its weakening, even if it would be to the detriment of the *status quo*, though it had vouched for its preservation within the European decision-making coryphaeus and was still holding to its commitment.

Prior to the new eruption of the British and German rivalry against the Ottoman Empire on the basis of their economic interests, being decisive in this development and even assigning to it the well-known epilogue, to prevent this, Austria-Hungary and Russia will use the mandate of the Great Powers to return to the well-known formula of pressure on the Ottoman Empire to seek to implement reforms in the European part, and especially in Macedonia. This was the only way

¹¹⁵⁹ See W. M. Corlegren: “*Iswojsky und Aherenthal vor der bosnischen Annexionskrise*”, Wien, 1955, p. 14.

¹¹⁶⁰ Idem, p. 14.

¹¹⁶¹ Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 266.

to “prevent” further aggravation of the crisis and its expansion beyond the supervisory framework set by Vienna and St. Petersburg with the consent of the Great Powers.¹¹⁶²

The focus on Macedonia was not accidental, as it already emerged as a staunch pivot of the crisis, a gunpowder-like force in the blast affecting all unresolved issues in the Balkans, which also fed them with unforeseen scenarios. But, evidently, the Ottoman Empire, from 1897 when Sultan Hamid’s reforms in Rumelia were to be heralded, would face the limits of its promising behavior, with no cover from within – being opposed by both Albanians and a growing opposition. The Young Turks and Albanians found common ground - as the situation was getting complicated by their neighbors, who made concessions to the Empire, such as those beginning with the Bulgarian *Exarchate* from 1870 onwards, continuing with the appointment of Serbian bishops in Shkup (Skopje) and Peja in 1898, opening of Serbian schools in Prizren, Shkup and some other parts of the vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir. Above all, by allowing the opening of Serbian consulates in Prishtina and Shkup they tried to use them to intensify their propaganda so that Kosovo and Macedonia would be presented by Serbs as “*Serbian spiritual cradle*”, while for Bulgarians it would be the “*center of Samuel’s Bulgaria*”. This was used then to exerting constant pressure on the Great Powers, in order to make future political configurations consistent with these “realities”, which were part of the violent constructs made possible precisely by what appeared as a “spirit” of reforms.

Faced with these circumstances, namely a significant weakening from within and increasingly aggressive interventions by Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria in the European part of the Empire, Sultan Hamid - wishing to maintain the support of Austria-Hungary, Russia and above all Germany, establishing very good relations in all fields, constantly expanding, leaning on them for his plans for the modernization of the country’s economy and strengthening of his international position into becoming a connecting factor between East and West - in addition to the concessions he will make to Christians in the name of implementing reforms, will be forced to turn to repressive policies against Albanians, namely those who he had labeled as “flowers of Islam” and “fortresses” in the European part, standing against the reforms. Meanwhile, the “military package” to quell the revolt against the Albanians, a green light would be given to the revolt of the Slavo-Macedonian population in Macedonia, which after the Exarchate, adding to the familiar rivalry between Albanians, Serbs and Greeks in this part a Bulgarian-Roman dimension. This deepened the crisis making it even more unpredictable, being already projected on the issue of the Slav-Macedonian population, present in the vilayet of Thessaloniki and partly in that of Manastir, where Bulgaria saw as part of the Bulgarian people,¹¹⁶³ while Serbia saw it as a medieval Slavic remnant, close to the Serbs, albeit without a clear national consciousness.¹¹⁶⁴

In fact, Bulgaria began to intervene in the Vilayet of Manastir and that of Thessaloniki, claiming that a good part of them would join the project of Greater Bulgaria, which Sofia had already declared not without the consent of Vienna, but also of Russia, and had already initiated a deployment of Bulgarian detachments (*comitas*) operating in many parts, and in addition to the Serbian and Greek ones, destabilizing the region.

By the end of 1890, Bulgarian agitation in Macedonia had entered a new stage with frequent attacks by members of the *Macedonian Internal Revolutionary Organization* (VMRO). This organization already had a common platform from a congress of Macedonians and Bulgarians organized a year before in Geneva, from where the request for the formation of an

¹¹⁶² For more see at Walters, E: “*Austro-Russian Relations der Goluchowski 1895-1906*”, in “*The Slavonic and East European Review*”, London, XXXII (1953), pp. 187-214; Raport, A: “*Mazedonien und di Komitadschis*”, Berliner Monatshefte, Berlin, VIII (August 1930), pp. 731-744; Sosnosky, T: “*Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866*”, band II Stuttgart und Berlin 1914; Chlymecky, L. F: “*Österreich-Ungarn und Italien. Der Westbalkan*”, Leipzig und Wien, 1907.

¹¹⁶³ See: “История в България”, Софија, 1981; Василиев, В. А; Божин Војнов: “*Българската Просвета в Македонија и одридска Тракија 1878-1913*”, 1982.

¹¹⁶⁴ See: Cvijić, Jovan: “*O etnografiji Makedonskih Slovena*”, Beograd, 1906, p. 12.

autonomous Macedonia emerged, which would include the Vilayet of Manastir and that of Kosova.¹¹⁶⁵

As the Slavo-Macedonian population in the Vilayet of Manastir and Thessaloniki had begun to organize into “internal” committees with local leaders such as Goce Delchev, Jane Sandanski and others, it was noted that they also sought cooperation with the Ottomans and Albanians for In the face of Serbian and Greek claims, as well as those of the Greek Patriarchate, Bulgaria had intervened in the formation of “foreign” committees - led by Bulgarian-Roman leaders, coming from “across the border” and headed by Jankov. The recruits from the Bulgarian state, where there were soldiers and members of the state police services, were engaged in diversionary operations and assassinations aimed at destabilizing the situation in the Macedonian vilayets. Russian logistics helped them the most in these matters.

As the Slav-Macedonian population in the Vilayet of Manastir and Thessaloniki had begun to organize into “internal” committees with local leaders such as Goce Delcev, Jane Sandanski and others, notably, they also sought cooperation with the Ottomans and Albanians in facing the Serbian and Greek claims, as well as those of the Greek Patriarchate, Bulgaria had intervened by creating “foreign” committees – entirely of great-Bulgarian orientation, coming from “across the border” and headed by Jankov. The recruits from the Bulgarian state, composed of soldiers and members of the state police services, were engaged in diversionary operations and assassinations aimed at destabilizing the situation in the Macedonian vilayets. Russian logistics helped them the most in these matters.

In line with this goal, Bulgaria had already begun secret talks with Belgrade and Athens over the plunder they were to share. Thus, the activity of “insurgent” detachments from the three countries, directed by their military and intelligence services, will be used to give alibi to projects already designed for the division of Macedonia between them, thus deepening and spreading the Balkan crisis and revealing the truth about the crisis in Macedonia being raised on political issues not only related to the solution of the Macedonian issue, i.e. the division of Macedonia between these countries, but also to other issues pressing the interests of European powers.¹¹⁶⁶

The great European powers feared this development. Austria-Hungary in particular, which, although having a “principled” agreement with Russia to oversee their interests in this area and allow nothing to happen without their approval, called on the Ottoman Empire to take vigorous action to prevent unforeseen developments.

Russia, although interested in keeping Sultan Hamid’s position against the Young Turk opposition and the Europeans, who already held him accountable – considering him a guarantor of his own interests in the East - also intervened with the Sublime Porte, demanding harsher behavior towards Albanians, which according to her appeared to be the main disturbers in the vilayet of Kosovo, that of Manastir and Thessaloniki. On this occasion, the Russians emphasized that the “anti-Slavic” activity of the Albanians was seen as related to the Ottoman authorities, who were not interested in the implementation of reforms in the European part and were playing a double game with them.¹¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, the more the Sublime Porte increased its military campaigns in Kosovo, the more Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece will continue supporting the “insurgent” gangs and their bands in the vilayets of Manastir and Thessaloniki, expanding them from the summer of 1902 to Kosovo (North) doing so according to a secret agreement that already existed between Belgrade and Sofia regarding the division of areas into “Serbian” and “Bulgarian”, in accordance with the activity of their committees *“in defense of the Christian population from Arnaut oppression”*,

¹¹⁶⁵ Prifti, K: *“Le Mouvement nacional albanais de 1869 a 1900: La Ligue de Pejë”*, Tiranë, 1989, pp. 149-50.

¹¹⁶⁶ Rappaport, A: *“Mazedonien und di Komitadschis”*, Berliner Monatshefte, Berlin, VIII (August 1930), pp. 731-744.

¹¹⁶⁷ Sosnosky, T: *“Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866”*, band II Stuttgart und Berlin, 1914.

which meant nothing but preparation for the partitioning of the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir between Serbs and Bulgarians.¹¹⁶⁸

The opening of the Russian consulate in Mitrovica, which was experienced by Albanians as a preparation for the new Slavo-Orthodox annexations to their lands, this time done with the approval of the Sublime Porte, will also add fuel to the fire, which, in the name of overseeing the implementation of reforms, had already allowed foreign missions in Kosovo and Macedonia, along with the opening of Serbian, Russian and Greek consular services, to act in this direction. Against this decision, in the north of Kosovo, Albanians rose into an uprising led by Isa Boletini, who had very good relations with Sultan Hamid.

Isa Boletini's stubbornness during September and October will be focused on the area around Mitrovica and his own properties. It was limited and without claims of any greater aggravation with the Sultan. This raises the suspicion that it was even planned by the Porte, as many similar actions until then, to be ignored by the commitments made before the Great Powers, on the grounds that they were not accepted from within, i.e. by the Albanian people, the position of which had to be taken into account when discussing issues that had to do with them and their fate.

This could be evidenced by the role of Shemsi Pasha, who, as responsible for quelling the Albanian revolt against the decision to open a Russian consulate in Mitrovica, after a while, replaced the military campaign with direct talks with Isa Boletini, whereby he persuaded him to leave Mitrovica at first, and at the end of November 1902, by order of Sultan Hamid, he was brought to Istanbul and was appointed to the rank of Guard of the royal palace (*tüfenciler*), where he remained until in 1906 and then returned to Kosova with an imperial gift of land and a rank of officer in the local police.¹¹⁶⁹

The withdrawal of Kosovo Albanians from a large-scale uprising, however, will allow the Sublime Porte to turn to the suppression of various gangs operating in Macedonia, which was beginning to create a state of emergency and an aggravating situation void of any order, threatening the entire region. Thus, during the month of September-October of that year, the Ottoman army severely suppressed the movement of gangs in the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir, which had already begun to be named by Belgrade, Athens, Sofia, Moscow and others as Macedonia, although this name did not exist from the Middle Ages onwards. The Ottoman campaign against the armed gangs was followed by some approval from the Albanians in these parts, who had begun to suffer under the activities of the Slav-Macedonian and Greek gangs, which in many parts had seized power and committed crimes against the vulnerable Albanian population.

In order to prevent the resurgence of gangs, as a reward for allowing the use of military force in these two vilayets, the Great Powers urged the Ottoman Empire to accept other reforms in the vilayets of European Turkey as included in "*Instructions for the vilayets of Rumelia*", announced in early December 1902 by the Sublime Porte.

Sultan Hamid united the three vilayets: those of Thessaloniki, Manastir, and Kosova in a "megavilayet", called "*Three vilayets*" (*Vilayer-i Selase*) with claims that this and not the Albanian vilayets should represent its supporting factor in the European part. It relied on seven points:

- The gendarmerie should consist of both Muslims and Christians according to the number of population and local needs;
- Valis should take care of the progress of agriculture, trade and road construction;
- Civil courts composed of Muslims and Christians should be established;
- A commission of four members which would control the work of the governor and the chief inspectors in the spirit of reforms should be appointed;

¹¹⁶⁸ Idem.

¹¹⁶⁹ Gawrych, George: "*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*", Tiranë, 207, p. 203.

- For each Vali a kaymakam should be appointed for administrative affairs;
- The position of Chief Inspector for all the provinces of European Turkey should be established;
- The tax system should remain as before.¹¹⁷⁰

From this point of view, the issue of the Rumelia vilayet should give a strong blow to the Albanian aspirations for an autonomous Albania on the basis of the unification of the four vilayets (Shkodra, Kosova, Manastir and Janina).

However, Sultan Hamid's "Rumelia stunt", like many other similar moves he made from Tanzimat onwards, did not deprive Albanians of their political programs of the demand for Albanian autonomy, because it was not outside an international context and outside of the Great Powers plans.

With that being said, one should consider the fact that as soon as it had been formulated as a request by the "Albanian League of Prizren" in 1878, even indirectly (through a memorandum from Shkodra sent to the British representative in the Berlin Congress) it was also supported by Great Britain and its representative at the Conference of Ambassadors of the Berlin Congress in Istanbul, in 1880. Although at that time it had not found support from the representatives of the Great Powers, the British representative's request for an autonomous Albanian vilayet within the Ottoman Empire was also submitted to the Sublime Porte, which was rejected on the grounds that it undermined the state unity of Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁷¹

However, as such and with different content, it will be repeatedly referred to as an open opportunity after the departure of the Ottoman Empire from its European part.

With his "*Instruction for the vilayets of Rumelia*", on the grounds that "*the country was protected from internal destruction*", Sultan Hamid will again refer to the Albanians, rejecting their demands, which they had already turned into a political platform and had openly declared as an opportunity for their cause to be resolved in cooperation with the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers. At the same time, he will make efforts to prevent the partitioning of what was already emphasized by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece as Macedonia.

The Rumelia "stunt", even as presented by Sultan Hamid, did not leave much hope of placing the issues on the rails of calm, let alone resolution. Because, projects and proposals for improving the situation in the provinces of Rumelia, for the development of trade, agriculture, handicrafts and world affairs, such as those that appeared in the Instruction, had been there before and had remained on paper.

They even exacerbated the issue because they did not have the support of the social strata (feudal lords and the very rusty local administrative apparatus) on which Sultan Hamid relied, nor on the Islamist fanatical clergy, which also had influence in these parts as he still maintained the role of patron saint of the faith. Against these circumstances, the reorganization of the gendarmerie, police and the courts (including Christians), followed by the use of a part of the local income for the needs of the vilayets, etc., together with the appointment of a general inspector with competencies of a minister and next to him a civil servant and another military person, began to be experienced rather as an attempt to strengthen the oppressive apparatus in the service of establishing privileges over Christians, rather than changing the situation as it arose. Because as soon as the Skopje-based Inspector General (Husein Hilmi Pasha) took office, he imposed strict oversight on the local government. The Valis and Mutasarrifs reported all the events taking place in their areas of responsibility and, in turn, Husein Hilmi Pasha regularly sent information to the Sultan's Palace and the Sublime Porte.¹¹⁷²

Since the reforms were half-way and were followed by a large rejection of the population, mainly Albanians, taking on the dimensions of uprisings that disrupted the Ottoman Empire from within, together with the rejection of the Slav-Macedonian population, which except in the

¹¹⁷⁰ Pllana, Emin: "*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*", Prishtinë, 1978, p. 170.

¹¹⁷¹ See Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*", Prishtinë, 2008.

¹¹⁷² Gawrych, George: "*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*", Tiranë, 2007, faqe 203.

vilayet of Thessaloniki, in others areas, in relation to the Albanians, was a minority, already involved in the manipulations coming from abroad (Serbia, Greece and especially Bulgaria, which heavily involved with the committees and other provisions), the Great Powers remained dissatisfied. This was especially so because their insufficient implementation had exacerbated the interethnic situation in line with interferences from neighboring countries and their already recognized interests. It threatened another major explosion, fearing that it would serve as a pretext for Balkan countries (Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria) to enter a war that would break the *status quo*.

Austria-Hungary and Russia, which since the Petersburg agreement of April 1897 between Goluhovski and Muraviev, had the mandate of the Great Powers for the Balkans, after once again obtaining the consent of England, France and Germany, on 21 In February 1903, presented the Sublime Porte with the Austrian-Russian project of reforms, which, after some objections, the Sultan was forced to accept.¹¹⁷³

Through these “reforms”, the Great Powers aimed at maintaining the *status quo* in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and, by giving certain rights to the Christian, Slavic and Greek populations, prevent an outbreak of uprisings, the activity of armed groups and the possibility of an open military intervention by Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece in Rumelia.¹¹⁷⁴

The proclamation of the Austrian-Russian project of reforms of February 21, 1903 was received with great dissatisfaction by the Albanian population, because in them they saw directly the threat for a new partitioning of their country. The implementation of these reforms only in the vilayets of Thessaloniki, Manastir and Kosova, practically sanctioned the fragmentation of the Albanian vilayets of Kosova and Manastir, which were separated from the vilayets of Shkodra and Janina. This prompted the Albanians to rise up against the Austrian-Russian project. Major riots broke out in many cities in Kosova. On March 31, 1903, an Albanian soldier shot the Russian consul near Mitrovica, while the latter was paying an official visit to the area. Ten days later the consul died of his wounds. On August 3 of that year, another Albanian killed the Russian consul, Rostkovski, in Manastir. These two killings within a period of four months were part of the reason that forced Vienna and St. Petersburg to abandon the promotion of reforms where the majority of the population was Albanian.¹¹⁷⁵

The Albanian press in Bucharest, Sofia, and other centers began to echo the efforts of Albanians to reject the project. Sofia’s “*Drita*” newspaper, “*Albania*” and others, raised their voices against these plans demanding that the Great Powers seriously return to the demands of the Albanians for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, because only then would the region be relieved of the danger of the crisis and unresolved issues were put on the rails of solutions. Fearing that the Albanian resistance could remain isolated only in the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir, which is in fact what happened, the Albanian press warned of a new Albanian alliance, which would be comprehensive and even more repulsive to all the reforms in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. The Albanian resistance was required to have as its motto the demand for Albanian autonomy, which had to enter the package of imperial reforms and in no way excluded from it.

The Bucharest newspaper “*Drita*” demanded that the Albanians force the Sultan to respond to the demands of the Great Powers for reforms in the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir already named “Macedonia”, to accept autonomy, thus claiming the Slavic countries would be stopped and the situation in the European part of the Empire would stabilize. These and similar demands, which were spreading on all sides, to which were added those of the opposition circles from the ranks of the Young Turks Movement concentrated in France, will mobilize the rejecting spirit of the Albanians, turning it into part of a movement, attaining nationwide proportions. This forced

¹¹⁷³ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Part, Tiranë, 2002, p. 308.

¹¹⁷⁴ Idem, p. 308.

¹¹⁷⁵ Gawrich, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 205.

the Sultan to issue a circular calling on Albanians to submit and not to revolt, while at the end of February 1903, for the same purpose, he sent special commissions to Peja, Gjakova, Reka, Shkup, and other cities in Kosova, aimed at announcing the reforms as useful for Albanians as well, as allegedly the collection of taxes, the return of law and order, and the opening of schools, improved their situation.

Prime Minister Said Pasha, referring to the need to implement reforms in Albania, tried to create an impression that most Albanians were not against the reforms and that “*apart from a few leaders, order and peace in Albania are what the majority of the population want, both the leaders and the rich.*”¹¹⁷⁶

But, consequently, it was largely the leaders and the rich who rejected the reforms, which equally jeopardized their interests being socially and economically devalued. This will be openly stated to the Chief Inspector of Rumelia, Hilmi Pasha, during a meeting he had with the Kosovo leadership and some of the leaders of the movement against reforms. He was clearly told that in the Albanian vilayets the implementation of some measures of national character was required, such as the official recognition of the Albanian nationality, the right to school and use of their mother tongue, its introduction in religious ceremonies, the appointment of Albanian officials from among capable people, the use of a part of taxes collected in Albania for the establishment of schools, an amnesty for political prisoners, prohibiting of foreigners to interfere in the affairs of the four Albanian vilayets, etc.¹¹⁷⁷

The last demand, namely the ban on foreigners interfering in the affairs of Albanian vilayets, in fact, will be the most provocative and at the same time the most unacceptable, because that is on what the Albanians based their suspicions that the Empire had already begun to sacrifice them, therefore they had to fight against any foreign presence in Kosovo and other Albanian vilayets. The presence of foreigners encouraged Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece to continue their rivalry of gangs and bands, in order to practically replace the Ottoman government with the international one, which, according to them, prepared the ground for their appropriation in the name of the “realities created” by the reforms.

In this regard, the Albanians will be most concerned about the presence of the Russian and Serbian consulates in the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir, to the point of revolt and an uprising. Their presence, as open agencies of these countries, directly encouraged Christians, first and foremost the Serb minority, as well as Bulgarians, to act against the Albanians in the name of realizing their rights in accordance with Article 23 of the Berlin Congress, either by provoking them with chauvinistic demonstrations, or by pretending to be their victims and of what was called “*Arnaut oppression*”.

This served to alarm the Sublime Porte “*about the unbearable situation of Christians*”, as well as the Great Powers, which were already largely monitoring developments in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and the situation in it (either deteriorating or improving) as mainly assessed in compliance of Christian complaints against Albanians. Thus, based on this assessment pressure would then be exhorted on the Ottoman Empire, which had to prove its determination for the reforms by the repressive measures it had to take against the Albanian vilayets and by the concessions it had to make to the Christians, first and foremost to the Serbian minority, increasing to the point when Sultan Hamid had to accept full status of a millet for them.¹¹⁷⁸

¹¹⁷⁶ Idem, p. 309.

¹¹⁷⁷ Idem, p. 309.

¹¹⁷⁸ See “*Imperial Decree*” (*irade*) of 1903, by which the Serbs of the Ottoman Empire gained the status of a nation. Two years later, this right will be recognized to the Vlachs as well, while Sultan Hamid, when decreeing the opening of Serbian and Vlach language schools in Kosovo and the vilayet of Manastir, issued an ordinance banning the teaching of the Albanian language by American missionaries.

“ILINDEN” UPRISING AND THE REPUBLIC OF KRUSEVO

The big concessions, which, under the pressure of Russia but also of its allies, made to the Christians by the Ottoman Empire in its last breath, as well as an open presence of Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian gangs in Kosovo, particularly in the Vilayet of Manastir, as well as their activity, brought the rivalry of the Bulgarians with the Serbs and Greeks, who also had their own plans for the partition of Albanian lands, but also an appropriation of inhabited parts with their own population. This highlighted what emerged as the Macedonian Crisis as a political issue, to the “right of appropriation” of a population retarded by secession from the Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek state pertaining, as an ethnic amalgam without any national consciousness and in a language close to Bulgarian with each of them claiming it as belonging to them.¹¹⁷⁹

In this matter, between these three countries, there were no differences in approach, but rather in strategy. Because, as compared to Serbia and Greece, which agreed with the partition of Macedonia, and this had to be done in accordance with the positions of the Great Powers and the *status quo*, where an autonomous Macedonia could be accepted, but as a transitory - Bulgaria appeared rather impatient. She showed a tendency of pressing the Great Powers to include on the agenda as soon as possible what was already being projected from Sofia as a “Macedonian issue” within the space of the vilayets of Kosova, Manastir, and Thessaloniki, in the hope she had the support of Austria-Hungary, as well as Russia, which had certain interests, so that most of what arose over geographical concepts passed to them.

In line with this strategy, Bulgaria ordered its comitas located in the vilayets of Kosovo, Manastir and Thessaloniki to act to destabilize the situation. The starting point for this was the VMRO Organization, “РЕВОЛЮЦИОННАТА ВЪТРЕШНАТА НА МАКЕДОНИЙСКА ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ” (*Macedonian Revolutionary Internal Organization - VMORO*), founded in 1893, which, in 1903, took the name of VMORO, “РЕВОЛЮЦИОННАТА ВЪТРЕШНАТА НА МАКЕДОНИЈА-EDRENSKA ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ” (*Macedonian Edirne Revolutionary Internal Organization*).

The aim of this organization, despite its dualism (internal and external), remained the unification of Macedonia with Bulgaria by revolutionary means, although after the defeat of Ilinden, the revolutionary means will be softened by evolutionary ones, that is, by political war, as it happened after the Young Turk revolution until 1912.¹¹⁸⁰

In this regard, i.e. the change of methods (from revolutionary to political), efforts are known when the Bulgarian Committees from among the ranks of the “*Macedonian-Edirne Internal Revolutionary Organization*” (VMORO), to seek cooperation with Albanians and Vlachs, in order to join their slogan “*Macedonia for Macedonians*” - that “*as a common state*” of the three peoples would suit the Bulgarian goals.¹¹⁸¹

With this concept, Bulgaria sought to achieve two political goals in accordance with its hegemonic interests. First - to devalue the vilayets of Kosovo and Manastir as Albanian vilayets and separate them from that of Shkodra and Janina from Ottoman administration. And secondly - the Macedonian issue raised on the existence of a mixed Slavic ethnicity speaking a language similar to Bulgarian, but where there were also Vlach and Greek populations, commonly affiliated to Orthodox Christianity, where the Orthodox Church, both Greek and Bulgarian competed, would turn into a political issue replacing the Albanian one. This aimed at preventing

¹¹⁷⁹ Cvijić, Jovan: “*O etnografiji Makedonskih Slovena*”, Beograd, 1906, pp. 12-16.

¹¹⁸⁰ Matanov, H, Dimitrov, A and Babev, B: “*Historia e Bullgarisë*”, Tiranë, 2006; Ivanoff, I: “*La questioin Macedonienne au point de vue historique, ethnographique et statistique*”, Paris, 1920; Германов, С: “*Еспонеускеум печат на четите на ВМОРО*”, Велико Трново, 2010.

¹¹⁸¹ Ljuben, L: “*Izveštaji od 1903 na srpskite konzuli, mitropoliti i sveučilišni inspektori vo Makedonija 1875-1012* “. Skopje, 1955; “*Istorija na makedonskijot narod*”, I, Skopje, 1969; Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, pp. 203-205.

any independent Albanian state or even any autonomous form of it, regardless of how it would appear, which had to be prevented, if necessary, even through agreement with Serbia and Greece.

Taking advantage of the dissatisfaction with the reforms announced by Sultan Hamid on the occasion of the “Guidelines for Rumelia” and the creation of the “megavilayet” of Rumelia, which in all likelihood befitted the Albanian issue because the majority of the population was estimated to be of Albanian and Vlach descent, and driven by fears that the reforms could be to the detriment of Bulgaria, the numerous Bulgarian-Macedonian Committees in the Ohri, Kostur and Serez districts, pushed by the “Foreign Committees”, i.e. those supervised Directly from Bulgaria and inspired by the slogans “*Freedom or Death*” and “*Macedonia for Macedonians*”, blessed by the Bulgarian Exarchist clergy and its fierce campaign on the issue, in the spring of 1903, they rose up against the Ottoman garrisons in that area. It quickly turned into a war that the Bulgarian comitas waged against the Albanian population of the Muslim faith in that part in order to destroy their ethnic integrity. On August 2, 1903, on the day of St. Elijah, it will explode in Manastir too. On the same day, on the outskirts of the town of Krusevo, the so-called Republic of Krusevo was proclaimed, with Nikola Karev, commander of the insurgents in this city elected as its president.¹¹⁸²

Then, in the form of a war, which the Bulgarian comitas waged against the Muslim villages, the uprising spread to some parts of Thrace, in the vilayet of Thessaloniki, and, supervised by Bulgaria and its interests in it, lasted three months, until at the end of October. It was suppressed by the powerful intervention of the Sublime Porte, followed by severe retaliation against the Orthodox Christian population under the supervision of the Bulgarian exarchate of this part engaged on the side of the comitas.

Albanian historiography, on the contrary, estimates that the Ilinden Uprising was supported by the Albanian population of the eastern territories of Krushevo and its environs, confusing here the Vlachs (associated with Bulgaria, who were in fact participants in the insurgent structures) with Orthodox Albanians (part of also linked to the Bulgarian church to escape the Slavic and Greek churches) escaping manipulation of the population of this part by Bulgaria, as well as Serbia and Greece and their political goals mainly on religious grounds.¹¹⁸³

Of this nature is the assessment that “the Albanian patriots of Manastir, Prespa, Struga, Pogradec and other centers, supplied the Macedonian troops with weapons and ammunition”, and that the uprising was supported by the Albanian population of Shkup (Skopje), Tetova, Gostivar, Dibra and Struga.¹¹⁸⁴ Although, many sources indicate that there were a good part of *redifs* from these areas, mainly Albanians of the Muslim faith, who will be committed to the resurgence of the uprising because it affected their interests.¹¹⁸⁵

But these and similar facts will not prevent that part of Albanian historiography, which in accordance with the ideological platform, sees the Ilinden uprising as a “revolutionary organization of three peoples - Macedonians, Albanians and Vlachs”.¹¹⁸⁶ Although, this is completely excluded by Bulgarian historiography, which sees it only as a Bulgarian uprising in Macedonia.¹¹⁸⁷

But Ilinden, as an organization of the “three peoples”, is not even accepted by Macedonian historiography, which, in order to bring the uprising out of Bulgarian ownership and the concepts

¹¹⁸² Idem.

¹¹⁸³ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 311.

¹¹⁸⁴ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, II, Tiranë, 2002, p. 311.

¹¹⁸⁵ See: Hubka, Gustav: “*Die österreschisch-ungarische offizirenmission in Makedonien 1903-1909*”, Wiena, 1910; Jagic, D: “*Das Macedonischen Problem*”, 1903; Schwertfeger, Bernhard “*Die Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes 1871-1914*”, Teil 1-5 (Band 1-39), Berlin 1927-1928.

¹¹⁸⁶ Rahimi, Shukri: “*Format e rezistencës së popullit shqiptar kundër sundimit turk gjatë viteve 1900-1903 dhe karakteri i tyre*” (“*Forms of resistance of the Albanian people against Turkish rule during the years 1900-1903 and their character*”), “Përparimi”, Prishtinë, 1962, no. 4, p. 212.

¹¹⁸⁷ “*История в България*”, Софија, 1981; Василиев, В. А; Божин Војнов: “*Българската Просвета в Македонија и одридска Тракија 1878-1913*”, 1982; Guechoff, Iv E: “*L’Alliance Balkanique*”, Paris, 1915.

that it imposed on it during all the time, seeing it as a Bulgarian movement, constantly tries to see the participation of Vlachs and Albanians in the role of minorities, so in accordance with the platform of Macedonia deriving from the concept of AVNOJ, which considered valid as a “model” for a Macedonian state “with minorities”.¹¹⁸⁸

Similarly, the Yugoslav historiography influenced by the Serbian one, which, in order to eliminate the Bulgarian factor and its key role in the uprising and in the overall developments that followed the Macedonian crisis, sees “Slav-Macedonian” and scarcely a few Vlachs and no Albanians.¹¹⁸⁹

Whereas, Albanians, “represented” in the so-called “Republic of Krushevo”, are entirely missing in international sources.¹¹⁹⁰

Of course, the “argument” about this “multi-ethnicity” of “Ilinden”, which, however, was considered a Bulgarian movement, always appears only as “*Manifesto of Krushevo*”, whose authenticity is rightly contested, because the “full” version came from a proclamation of the Comintern of the thirties.

However, with or without this propaganda fabricated for propaganda purposes, the “Ilinden” uprising and all that emerged from it had to give political legitimacy to a movement in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, which, in addition to the interests of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece to acquire as much of its share as possible, Russia would achieve two goals at once. On one hand, it hindered the developing Albanian National Movement, for an Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, which would lay the foundations for the future Albanian state, which also appeared as an inevitable option for Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany. And, on the other hand, to bring into play the idea of San Stefano’s decisions for a Greater Bulgaria in this part in accordance with its interests, and where other allies would not be forgotten: Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, which would take part in “looting” of the Albanian ethnicity, but always according to the Russian calculations.

Also, on the Balkan plain, in accordance with the interests of the Orthodox countries and their strategy for the partition of Albanian lands, the propaganda about a “joint Macedonian uprising” aimed at creating a political climate to the detriment of the Albanian cause, whereby Albanians, becoming part of the scenarios on religious grounds (the Orthodox led by the Bulgarian exarchate and the influence of the Serbian and Greek Orthodox Church reflected in the later stages was not excluded) would rise against each other and the interests the National Awakening movement had proclaimed.

Despite the various interpretations and political realities emerging from it, the “Ilinden” uprising, though not to the extent that it had during the Greek revolution of the 1920s between Orthodox Albanians (Arvanites) and those of the Muslim faith, was crowned with the formation of the Greek state to the detriment of the Albanians,¹¹⁹¹ created the circumstances for a fratricidal war between Albanians.

This happened because, on the one hand, some Orthodox Albanians got involved as “volunteers” within the “People’s Defense Committees”, recruited by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (exarchate) and Bulgarian hegemonic interests in these units, under the command of

¹¹⁸⁸ “Историја на Македонски Народ”, Skopje, 1969; Pandevski, Manol: “*Makedonija na Balkanot*”, Skopje, 1990; Zografski, Danco: “*За македонското праианје*”, Skopje, 1990; Зографски, Д: “*Крушевката Република*”, Skopje, 1948; Симоновски, Т: “*Книга за Илinden*”, 1969; Jagic, D: “*Das Macedonischen Problem*”, 1903.

¹¹⁸⁹ *Istorija Naroda Jugoslavije*, Beograd, 1963. Božić, J: „*Istorija Jugoslavije*”, Beograd, 1973.

¹¹⁹⁰ Nikolaides, Clenates: “*La Macedonie*”, Berlin, 1899; Richard, Crampton: “*Bulgaria 1878-198: A History*”, Boulder, 1983; Hubka, Gustav: “*Die österreschisch-ungarische offizirenmission in Makedonien 1903-1909*”, Wiena, 1910; Hösch, Edgar: “*Geschichte der Balkanländer: Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart*”, München, 1995; Brailsford, H. N: “*Macedonia: Its Races and their Future*”, London, 1906; Fikret, Adanir: “*Die Makedonische Frage: Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1908*”, Wiesbaden, 1979.

¹¹⁹¹ The Greek Revolution of 1822 was also preceded by a “Manifesto” – speech, known as the “Manifesto of Odessa”, by the revolutionary Ypsilanti and County, in which case the Christian Albanians of Greece were invited to take part in the anti-Ottoman revolution, with whom “a common Greek state would be created”, which as it turned out, emerged as a state based on Hellenic hegemony based on the motto “whoever is Greek is Orthodox, and whoever is Orthodox is Greek”.

Bulgarian comitas, marching against Albanian villages in the part of Resen and Manastir. And, on the other hand, Albanians of the Muslim faith appear within the Ottoman army, as *redifs* or volunteers, to protect the villages attacked by the comitas led by the Bulgarians, but also to liberate the lands occupied by them from the first days of the uprising.¹¹⁹²

Therefore, from the Albanian point of view, the “Ilinden” uprising, led by Russia and Bulgaria and their military services, although developed under the political motto “Macedonia to the Macedonians”, as a formula supported by Serbia and Greece for their own interests, has produced harmful consequences for Albanians and their cause in many ways.

MACEDONIAN CRISIS AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

The “Ilinden” Uprising and its extinction, however, in addition to efforts to bypass the Albanian issue, as a Slavic-Orthodox project, ignoring or making it disappear altogether, highlighted another development that, at least for some time, ruined the unprincipled agreements between the Balkan countries (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece). It broke the regional balance, based on these factors, which for some time had given some common color to the pressure exerted on the Ottoman Empire to force it to have the Great Powers intervene to have full control over it, in accordance with the purpose that the international mandate in the vilayets of Kosova, Manastir and Thessaloniki will represent a transitional stage for its division of space among these three Balkan states.

It was about the efforts of the Sublime Porte to divide from within the Slav-Orthodox alliance, especially the Bulgarian one, through the Greeks and *andartes*,¹¹⁹³ around their common “conspiracy” against Macedonia, inciting previous allies against each other, who were making plans for the partitioning of Albanian lands. Thus, after the basibouzuk units had annihilated the Bulgarian comitas and detachments from the “internal” and “external” committees, taking with them the large booty and leaving behind large ruins, the Chief Inspector of Rumelia, Hilmi Pasha, after instructions from Istanbul, allowed the introduction of Greek *andartes* in Western Macedonia. They took charge of security in that part. The *andartes* made the Bulgarian Exarchate communities be returned to the Patriarchate, practically restoring the power of the Greeks, which had been taken away from them since 1870 by the decision of the Sublime Porte to recognize the legitimacy of the Bulgarian church. As a result, the Slav-Macedonian population of these parts joined the Bulgarian influence, thus subjecting themselves to the great-Bulgarian ideas, which the Ottoman Empire at the time calculated for its own accounts in relation to the pressure coming from Serbia and Greece for the partitioning of European vilayets.

Following the end of “Ilinden”, the Ottoman Empire again turned the ball against the Greeks and against the Bulgarians, bringing into play the religious card, that is, the churches, as an important factor for a “mutual settlement of accounts”, which went to the Ottomans favor. Thus, the Greek Patriarchate took revenge on the Bulgarians on ecclesiastical grounds. Therefore, where the power of the Patriarchate was not accepted, the Greeks behaved like vengeful tyrants, executing those suspected of being renegades and forcing, under the barrels of arms, that the mass in the church be held according to the patriarchal version, when the priest or the residents refused performing the service in that fashion.¹¹⁹⁴

¹¹⁹² Schwertfeger, Bernhard: “*Die Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes 1871-1914*”, Teil 1-5 (Band 1-39), Berlin 1927-1928, and Prifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*”, Prishtinë, 1996, pp. 195-199.

¹¹⁹³ It is about Greek armed units, which were paid for their services, which were once tolerated by the Ottoman Empire.

¹¹⁹⁴ Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 206.

This counter-attack by the Greeks was directed by the armed despot of Kostur Germanos Karavangelis. Karavangelis was convinced that the war between the Patriarchate and the Exarchate was not for religious reasons at all - he openly stated that the only issue for Macedonia was the future map of the Balkan states, once the Ottomans were expelled.¹¹⁹⁵

With the reduction and almost extinction of the role of the Bulgarian Committees involved in the “*Macedonian Internal Revolutionary Organization*” (VMRO), the Serbian policy will also change, already giving up the previous determination of accepting a “Federal Macedonia” with a Slavic character, which prevented the creation of the joint Albanian vilayet and the future Albanian state within the Ottoman Empire, returning to the strategy of open war for territorial and ecclesiastical influence not only against Greeks and Bulgarians, but also against Albanians and Turks.

Since Belgrade already realized that the project of a “federal Macedonia”, that is, of an artificial political construct to destabilize the European part of the Ottoman Empire, had failed and no longer appeared as an option for either the Ottoman Empire or the Great Powers, it will get involved into a civil war to benefit as much as possible from what was already called “Macedonia” in the European chancelleries, playing a double card: both with Vienna and St. Petersburg. Serbia, therefore, demanded that Austria-Hungary and Russia be allowed to open ties with them based on who offered them more in Macedonia.

But to get to that price, Belgrade will try to take advantage of diplomacy: by aligning with the reforms of the Great Powers and taking advantage of the opportunities to produce as much crisis as possible in the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir through the introduction of gangs and escalation of the conflict with Albanians, but also with others, to push it as much as possible out of the dimension of the issue of the Albanians’ demand for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, to the problem of protecting Serbs, in accordance with Sultan Hamid’s decree that Serbs be granted the status of millet (nation) in the European part of the Empire, which after the recognition of the right to mother tongue and the opening of the Serbian Orthodox metropolis in Prizren and Skopje¹¹⁹⁶, they demanded that Kosovo be granted the status of “*old medieval Serbia*”.

That this was intended can best be seen by an order issued by Nikola Pašić, Prime Minister of Serbia, to the diplomatic representatives of Serbia, which stated, among other things:

*“To protect our compatriots from the harmful consequences of the monopoly of the bodies of the Patriarchate, which have been put at the service of Hellenization, to the detriment of the non-Greek supporters of the patriarchal church; and to oppose the activity of the agents of the Exarchate, whose committees are coming out with weapons in the provinces of great interest to us: Poreç, Kërçovë, Drimkol, Dibër, and Qyprili.”*¹¹⁹⁷

Therefore, the suppression of the “Ilinden” uprising could not put out the nationalist war. On the contrary, it deepened it. The war was spreading, but now with a changed balance. Like despot Karavangelis, the Istanbul government called the Bulgarian insurgency more dangerous. Greek and Serbian comitas at the center of their war put an end to the influence of Bulgarians or Albanians, or of each other - and the Ottoman forces did not cause much trouble. Even Christian committees had to some extent usurped the role of the state to protect order within the territory.¹¹⁹⁸

For this balance of power to look different from what it was, the Sublime Porte would take care by involving the Patriarchate where the Bulgarian Exarchate had previously managed for thirty-three years to change the definition of the Slav-Macedonian population from Greek

¹¹⁹⁵ Idem, p. 206.

¹¹⁹⁶ The full status of the *millet* (nation) to the Serbs of the European part of the Ottoman Empire will be recognized by Sultan Hamid by a decree (*irade*) of 1903, while that of the mother tongue and the return of the Serbian Orthodox metropolises in Prizren and Skopje was done by an Imperial decree of 1886.

¹¹⁹⁷ Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 207.

¹¹⁹⁸ Idem, p. 208.

influence to Bulgarian. This enforced the position of Serbia, which was very pleased that Bulgaria was brought before a situation to lose the space of influence by the Greeks, with whom Belgrade found it much easier to succeed, as the Slav-Macedonian population, if compelled to choose between the Greek or Serbian occupation, then more willingly would opt for the Serbs, since the linguistic and ecclesiastical ties between these peoples were closer than with the Greeks, as they had also a range of other common interests.¹¹⁹⁹

However, violence used against the insurgents by the Ottoman authorities and the return of the Greek Patriarchate's mandate to the detriment of the Exarchate, which undermined regional balances, accelerated the intervention of the Great Powers, especially Austria-Hungary and Russia, having international mandates for the Balkans.

In September and October 1903, Tsar Nicholas II and Emperor Franz Joseph met with their ministers to formulate a policy that would guarantee the status quo in what was already known as Macedonia, although in the Ottoman Empire they were known as the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir. The result was the Mürzsteg Agreement (Mürzsteg - Royal Residence near Vienna), the main point of which was the plan to reorganize the Ottoman gendarmerie in Macedonia, followed by several other accompanying measures taken by European powers. This plan would be implemented by professional police officers, sent by the Great Powers, who would command this force and take over the recruitment of new units that would also include police officers from among the Christian population.¹²⁰⁰

The agreement also stipulated that Inspector General Husein Hilmi Pasha be "reinforced" with two senior civil servants, a Russian and an Austrian, who would monitor the implementation of reforms and the situation in what was already known by the major powers. as Macedonia, while they had the main say for any final decision. Vienna and St. Petersburg took under their supervision the so-called "Macedonian" vilayets of Kosova, Manastir, and Thessaloniki. By this agreement, the disarmament of the population was also required.

To avoid further aggravation of the contradictions between the Great Powers, the territory in which the reforms would be implemented was divided into 5 areas (Serez, Dhrama, Thessaloniki, Shkup and Manastir), and in each French, English, Russian, Austrian and Italian officers were stationed respectively.¹²⁰¹

This was the first time that an "international force", with members from the major powers, had decided to calm down the internal unrest in the Balkans acting in the interests of the Great Powers.¹²⁰²

What was clear in this agreement and will have an impact on future developments towards a dead end, had to do with the fact that the Sublime Porte was losing authority, while the Sultan was already playing the role of a vassal of the Great Powers, trying to profit from their contradictions to the detriment of the state sovereignty it had already handed over to foreigners. Sultan Hamid was finally aware of his position when left for the first time without an alternative: to sign, or face the wrath of the Great Powers. Goluhovski acknowledged that Mürzsteg program was a direct intervention by Austria-Hungary and Russia in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. This was done in order to preserve the *status quo* in the Balkans and provide a peaceful solution to the problems of this part. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister stated that these two powers did not intend to exert any dominant influence here, but at the same time would not allow any other state to do so. On November 25, 1903, Sultan Hamid accepted the so-called Mürzsteg Agreement. The main points of the Mürzsteg project were as follows:

- *Appointment of an inspector with two European Control agents;*

¹¹⁹⁹ Cvijić, Jova: "O Etnografiji Slovenskih Makedonaca", Beograd, 1906, pp. 12-18.

¹²⁰⁰ Schwertfeger, Bernhard: "Die Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes 1871-1914", Teil 1-5 (Band 1-39), Berlin 1927-1928.

¹²⁰¹ Hubka, Gustav: "Die österreschisch-ungarische offizirenmission in Makedonien 1903-1909", Wien, 1910, and "Historia e popullit shqiptar", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 313.

¹²⁰² Glenny, Misha: "Historia e Ballkanit 1804-1999", Idem, p. 206.

- *Regulating the gendarmerie and the reforming provinces to be divided into smaller areas;*
- *Making changes to the administrative division of European Turkey, so that the grouping of different nations is done fairly;*
- *Regulating of state and judicial bodies, ensuring the participation of Christians and Muslims in state bodies;*
- *Regulating of state and administrative bodies in the spirit of local autonomy;*
- *Establishing mixed commission of inquiry by Muslims and Christians in the main administrative courts, intending to examine the political errors under Russian and Austro-Hungarian control;*
- *The Ottoman government to compensate the damage caused during the terror and repressions of the Turkish army against the Albanian and Macedonian insurgent movement. The damages had to be determined by mixed commissions;*
- *Releasing of Christians from tax payment for one year;*
- *The Sublime Porte to take measures for the return of immigrants and the reconstruction of their houses in the villages;*
- *Exempting the reservists of the first draft call of the regular detachments and medicines (the third call - basibouzukes) and the Ottoman Government to be acquainted with all the precautionary measures and requirements in the February note and with the Mürzsteg Project and to implement them without any delay.¹²⁰³*

Mürzsteg reform program envisioned the formation of two control commissions: one to monitor the governing bodies in implementing the reforms, and the second was a gendarmerie reorganization commission, in which all the reformist powers were to participate. According to Article 1 of the Program, the rights of civilian agents were as follows: Henry Ritter and Müller von Roghei on the part of Austria (the first was an extraordinary official adviser to the Foreign Ministry in Odessa), and on the part of Russia, Nikola Demernik.¹²⁰⁴

On December 30, 1903, the Sultan accepted by decree De Georgis as commander of the gendarmerie.¹²⁰⁵ Germany consented to it.¹²⁰⁶

This mission paved the way for a long tradition of unsuccessful interventions of the Great Powers in the European part of the Ottoman Empire; an intervention that in various forms, at least in terms of the Albanian issue, in some aspects, will remain such to reach even to our time.

However, the Austrian-Russian project of reforms and generally foreign interventions in the Albanian territories, gave another impetus to the insurgent movement in Albania, especially in the vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir. Albanians rose again against the reforms, being accompanied by an imposition of new taxes that the Sublime Porte decided to cover the numerous expenses and by a decision to disarm the mountain population, which caused double outrage.

Uprisings broke out in various parts of Kosovo, which for a long time remained isolated and without any common center of organization, while in the vilayet of Manastir the Albanian movement began to adapt to the circumstances of clandestine actions (illegality), organization in various revolutionary gangs and groups imposed by Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks.

This was a new momentum adding to the “possibilities” of action, though it lost the unity and legality of the demands for Albanian autonomy within the Empire, confusing them with the blurring of the “liberating” ones, which usually were in line with the interests of their neighbors (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria), where the motto of a “liberation” war meant nothing

¹²⁰³ L. Bittner: “*Chronologisches Verzeichnis der Österreichischen Staatverträge*”, Volume III, Wien, 1914, p. 526.

¹²⁰⁴ Ruchti, Jacob: “*Die Reformaktion Österreich-Ungarns und Russlands in Mazedonien 1903-1908*”, Gotha, 1918, p. 2.

¹²⁰⁵ Idem, p. 3.

¹²⁰⁶ A. Geschke: “*Die Deutsche Politik in Macedonischen Frage bis zur Türkischen Revolution von 1908*”, Danzing, 1932, p. 77.

more than creating the conditions for Albanian lands to secede from their ethnicity and join them violently, what actually happened after the First Balkan Wars.

However, in Kosovo, where everything continued in accordance with the concept of large popular movements, shown for the first time by the “Albanian League of Prizren” to continue till the “League of Peja”, led by patriot Haxhi Zeka, this time, their epicenter became Gjakova led by Sulejman Batusha. Hundreds of insurgents attacked the Ottoman army garrison in the town, but failed to capture it. The uprising then spread to Peja, Luma, Reka reaching as far north as Mitrovica. With the ups and downs it continued throughout the spring and summer of that year. In September, as soon as the offensive of the Ottoman forces led by Shemsi Pasha, known for military intervention in the Vilayet of Kosova, and the agreement reached between the governor of Kosova, Shaqir Pasha, and some of the leaders of the uprising, it was almost extinguished. There remained some open hotbeds of resistance, indicating the disagreement of the Albanians with the reforms.

Although the Albanian uprisings of 1903-1904 were not of an all-encompassing intensity and did not bring trouble to the Ottoman forces especially scattered in the Albanian vilayets to enable the implementation of the reforms that had been accepted by the Sultan, and they represented the first international intervention of this nature in the Albanian vilayets and those around them, however, the international presence for the first time directly indicated the outlines of the spheres of interest in this area.

Austria-Hungary will focus on the Albanian parts and will direct its attention there, while Russia will focus on the Slav-Macedonian parts. Here, too, for the first time, Italian interests emerged, being closer to the Russian ones when it comes to reducing the influence of Vienna in the Albanian and French space with pro-Serbian and British nuances as pro-Greek.

While the Germans showed to be “quite principled” in the name of maintaining the *status quo* in the region, showing an interest in the stability of the Ottoman Empire, as they had their own economic accounts, while also implementing reforms in its European space, their ally Austria-Hungary strengthened its influence especially by extending to the Albanian vilayets, whose oversight was part of its strategic preoccupations.¹²⁰⁷

In this spirit, driven by the Austro-Hungarian influence, so that the Albanian issue be separated from the reforms, or that it should enjoy an autochthonous treatment, the International Military Commission, in charge of defining the territories where the reforms would be implemented, considered the issue of organizing *an Albanian sanjak in the Vilayet of Kosova*. It would be excluded from the reform zone and would consist of districts where Albanians made up the vast majority of the population, part of which would extend from Kaçanik in the south to Kollashin in the north, including the Pazari i Ri and Plevla. This proposal was made by the Austrian-Hungarian military attaché, Baron Gizelli.¹²⁰⁸

Organizing of an Albanian sanjak in the Kosova Vilayet greatly disturbed Serbia. After the fierce protests that Serbia filed to Russia, Russia’s representative in the Reform Commission, supported by the Italian one, managed to avoid organizing the Kosovo Albanian sanjak.¹²⁰⁹

The first Russian-Italian “approach” in the International Commission and the removal of the Austrian-Hungarian proposal made it require that the reforms exclude not only the Vilayet of Shkodra and that of Janina, but also the Albanian lands of the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir. This brought about sudden disturbances between the great powers, though Vienna was determined to interrupt any role of the Italians that would jeopardize its concept of safeguarding interests in this part.

Under Austrian-Hungarian pressure, the International Military Commission, in February 1904, decided to temporarily exclude from the reforms the western provinces of the vilayets of Manastir and Kosova, in which Albanians constituted the majority of the population (the Korça

¹²⁰⁷ “*Diplomatische Aktenstücke*”, Wien, 1906, p. 27.

¹²⁰⁸ Idem.

¹²⁰⁹ Ruchti, Jacob: “*Die reformaktion Österreichs-Ungarns und Russlands in Mazedonien 1903-1908*”, Gotha, 1918, p. 6.

Sanjak) - with the exception of Kostur kazas, for the Elbasan Sanjak, for the western part of the Ohri kazas, for the whole Sanjak of Dibra, for that of Prizren, for the southern and western part of the Sanjak of Peja and for the kazas of Plevla and Senica in the Sanjak of Pazari i Ri).

In accordance with this division, the Military Commission, on April 5, 1904, took the final decision regarding the division of the areas subject to reform. Austria-Hungary took the Sanjak of Skopje, Russia the Sanjak of Thessaloniki, England the Sanjak of Ohri, France the Sanjak of Serez, and Italy the Sanjak of Manastir.¹²¹⁰

General De Georgisi demanded that the regions of Prishtina and Prizren also enter the framework of reforms, but this was opposed by Austria-Hungary, which was not ready to make any concessions to the Italians in the Albanian parts. The Italian general will justify this by saying that *Mürzsteg* did not decide to exclude the Kosovo vilayet from the reform plan, as this would not be allowed by Russia, which had in mind Serbia's demands that the Kosovo vilayet be included in the package, as in that way "*it protected its Serbian character*".¹²¹¹

The Ottoman Empire was interested in implementing reforms in Kosovo. Throughout the proposals, it persisted that it be included. The Ottoman government feared the Austro-Hungarian stance and claims, so it proposed to the Great Powers that the reform program be extended to the Albanian provinces, and that the major states oversee the implementation of the reforms.¹²¹²

Viewed from the Ottoman interest, this seems a bit paradoxical knowing that the parts involved in the reform areas, subject to international supervision, practically lost their control. However, the reckoning here was related to the fear of the Sublime Porte that leaving out the reforms of parts of the Albanian vilayets could be linked to the claims of Austria-Hungary, that in the future, Albania would declare the autonomous vilayets so that its extension to connect with Bosnia and Herzegovina to create a long Austro-Hungarian "belt" area from Sarajevo, Shkodra, Prishtina, Shkup and Manastir to Janina.

The configuration of the supervision of the Albanian vilayets (those involved in the reforms and those that will not be included in them, especially most of the Vilayet of Kosova) Vienna will achieve successfully also due to the fact that Russia was engaged in war with Japan. Russia will, in a way, explain to Serbia that its interests in Kosovo would continue to be protected,¹²¹³ even though it was known that in those circumstances they were only dry promises. This did not stop Serbia from constantly protesting and demanding that Kosovo be included in the reform package and entrusted to Italian and French officers.¹²¹⁴

Leaving out of the reforms of a good part of the Albanian sanjaks and by not including the Sanjak of Prishtina in any of the areas of the Great Powers, one of the largest in the vilayet of Kosovo, although not directly, meant acceptance by the Great Powers of the Albanian ethnic character of all these territories (i.e. the Vilayet of Kosova and the western provinces of the Vilayet of Manastir), which marked at the same time a victory for the Albanian National Movement, this did not remove the threat posed to them by the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek claims which they were constantly confronted with.

On the contrary, Belgrade, Sofia and Athens, backed and led by Russia, will do their best to focus their further action on this point in order to prevent Kosovo from becoming a bastion of the Albanian National Movement, as had occurred during the "Albanian League of Prizren", promoted not only by the fight for the protection of Albanian lands, but also the emergence of the core of Albanian citizenship, as will happen in 1880 with the formation of a Provisional Government emerging by the extraordinary Assembly of the "Albanian League", held in Prizren

¹²¹⁰ "Diplomatische Aktenstücke", Wien, 1906, no, 36.

¹²¹¹ "Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914", Collection of diplomatic acts of the German Foreign Ministry, Volume 22, no. 7390.

¹²¹² M. B: "Stara Srbija i reforme", Beograd, 1906, p. 7, according to Pllana, Emin: "Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi", Prishtinë, 1978, p. 195.

¹²¹³ Čorović, Vladimir: "Odnosi Srbije i Austro-Ugarske u XX veku", Beograd, 1936, p. 31.

¹²¹⁴ Idem, p. 36

after the fall of Ulqin, emerging after more than four centuries of Ottoman occupation to be associated with the work of Gjon Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE YOUNG TURKS AND ALBANIANS

THE OPTION OF BRINGING DOWN DESPOTISM THROUGH REVOLUTION

The Mürzsteg agreement, in addition to restoring the balance of power that more or less existed between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans and, this being its main function, had two side effects, the importance of which would become clearer in a few years.¹²¹⁵ Because, if for the Great Powers, Mürzsteg was but a practical exercise in crisis management, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria began to interpret the agreement differently, mainly in accordance with their hegemonic intentions long ago announced in national programs such as the Serbian “*Naçertanije*”, Greek “*Megali idhea*”, now joined by the Sofia’s idea of a greater Bulgaria, and to do so, even in accordance with a clause (Item C), which allowed the revision of administrative boundaries, as stated: “*with the aim of creating more stable groups of different nationalities*”.¹²¹⁶

This clause, not free of an incitement of deceit, was understood by these countries as a geopolitical test for the final partition of the Albanian vilayets (Kosova and Manastir), established as Macedonia among them. The exclusion of most of Kosovo from the reform program (three southern sanjaks), inhabited mainly by Albanians and this meant international recognition of their ethnic Albanian character, met with resistance from the Balkan states. The latter began publishing various statistics and records on the numerical condition of the population, reflecting it differently from what it was, that is, with claims of being “mixed”, with a Serb or Greek majority, presenting suspicious evidence and Medieval “title-deeds” based on incriminated and manipulated records of churches and other monuments of Christian ecclesiastical cults, which also belonged to Albanians.¹²¹⁷

These notes and these “evidence” sent to the Great Powers were intended to include the Vilayet of Kosova and other parts of the Vilayet of Manastir, excluded from the reform program thanks to the ethnic Albanian structure, in the reform program, in a way as to deny their Albanian ethnic character. But Austria-Hungary, the originator of the entire reform program and with the main say in determining the parts that should be included in them, tried not to expand them to the central part of the vilayets of Kosova and Shkodra. Through various statistics and diplomatic propaganda and what it will put in its media, Vienna proved that the majority of the population in these areas were Albanians.¹²¹⁸

Furthermore, taking advantage of the international situation, especially Russia's difficult position in its war with Japan, Austria-Hungary managed to gain the right to implement reforms in most of the territory that included lands from Pazari i Ri and the Albanian northern border up to Kriva Palanka and Kratova.¹²¹⁹

¹²¹⁵ Glenny, Misha: “*Histori e Ballkanit 1804-1999*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 208.

¹²¹⁶ Idem, p. 208.

¹²¹⁷ For more information on the manipulation of registers and the creation of false statistics see in “Kosova”, Book One (Antiquity and the Middle Ages), Prishtinë, 2012 in the chapter: “*Arbrit dhe raportet etnike me pushtuesit sllavë në shekujt XIII-XIV*” (“*Arberians and ethnic relations with Slavic invaders in the 13th-14th centuries*”), pp. 461-481.

¹²¹⁸ Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 198.

¹²¹⁹ Idem, p. 199.

Thus, under the direct supervision of Austro-Hungarian officers, it was the Sanjak of Shkup sanjak that separated Serbia from what was projected as Macedonia together with the Albanian-majority Kaçanik kaza. This important strategic space enabled it to penetrate the east.

Since Bulgaria had already suffered a heavy defeat after the end of “Ilinden” Uprising and the Ottoman Empire threatened direct punishment if, as before, it continued to send Bulgarian troops to the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir, which was seen as Macedonia, or in any form would support VMRO in this part, it was left to Serbia and Greece joining the race. Each with its own claims, using “their ethnic presence as their main plea”, they came out with their gangs, whether organized in Serbian and Greek settlements, or from time to time imported from abroad, i.e. from Serbia and Greece, in order to aggravate the situation in the Albanian-majority parts through assassinations and various atrocities.

This kind of deterioration was of a strategic nature, as Serbian and Greek gangs, especially the former, had to operate in areas where Belgrade’s hegemonic propaganda, as well as that of Athens, had begun before the International Commission and the governments of the Great Powers engaged in what was projected as Macedonia, to send fake and fabricated “title-deeds” long before making it appear as “Serbian medieval remains” and also “as shrinking by the centuries-old violence of the Arnauts” expressing the “Serbian medieval character of Kosovo”. This “character” was still threatened by Arnaut atrocities, against which the Serbs or even the local Greeks, left at the mercy of the oppressors, had to defend themselves by the “guards” of the villages or monasteries!¹²²⁰

In fact, they were not defensive detachments of desperate people, as claimed, who had no choice but to take up arms, but rather Belgrade-organized detachments of officers and soldiers operating in those areas for these purposes, so that they too could be included in the circle of reforms and thus be deprived of the treatment of an Albanian ethnicity.¹²²¹

In fact, these gangs and squads had already started operating in parts where there were no Serbs at all, in order to further provoke the Albanians so they would retaliate against in the areas where Serbs lived, and thus be charged with actions against them. For these purposes, there will be cases of self-infliction of damage and desecration of some Orthodox churches, which were then alarmed as the work of Albanians, although it was well known that monasteries and medieval Orthodox churches in Kosovo were religious cults that also belonged to Albanians (most of them before the arrival of the Ottomans, when they as Christians, belonged to the Orthodox rite), and as such they naturally preserved them through time even in parts of Kosovo where there were no Serbs at all or who had been in a minority. Orthodox monasteries and other religious cults were preserved by Albanians even when the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate left Kosovo in the 17th century. It was the Albanian voyvodes of churches and monasteries (in Deçan, Peja, Deviq, and others) who preserved them at the cost of self-sacrifice, as they felt them like cults of their own centuries-old spiritual tradition.¹²²²

The constant pressure and the account of the destabilization of the Albanian vilayets, however, required joint participation of all the contenders for the Albanian lands. This made Serbia, although it was in its interest for Bulgaria to be kept as close as possible to the vilayet of Kosovo and that of Manastir, to turn to restoring ties with it. Getting it closer to the Balkan cake, it removed it from any possible alliance with the Albanians, which could be encouraged by Austria-Hungary, suspected of being able to play on this card as well, something that Germans

¹²²⁰ More about Belgrade’s diversionary activity in organizing Chetnik gangs in Kosovo as well as their activity which was led by a well-prepared center for such operations, where Serbian enclaves and Orthodox monasteries, declared Serbian, had to be instrumentalized, see: Hadži-Vasiljev, Jovan: “*Četnička akciza u Staroj Srbiji i Makedoniji*”, Beograd, 1928, and Branko Perunovic: “*Pisma srpskih konzula iz Prištine 1890-1900*”, 1985.

¹²²¹ Idem.

¹²²² See: Krasniqi, Mark: “*Manastirske vojvode u Kosovsko-Metohijskoj oblasti*”, Glasnik KM, III, Prishtinë, 1958; Rizaj, Skënder: “*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*”, Prishtinë, 1982; Gjini, Gaspër: “*Raško Prizrenska Biscupija*”, Zagreb, 1968; Marquet, Odette: “*Pjetër Bogdani – letra dhe dokumente*”, Shkodër, 1997; Malcolm, Noel: “*Kosova një histori e shkurtër*”, Prishtinë, 2001.

favored too viewing Bulgaria as a space in line with their interests. After several reciprocal talks, on March 30, 1904, a treaty was signed between Belgrade and Sofia, which, although motivated by “support for the reform action”, actually sought the cooperation of the two states to influence the expansion of reforms to the Vilayet of Kosova.¹²²³

A month later, this agreement was followed by another treaty between Serbia and Bulgaria, whereby the two countries agreed that the Vilayet of Kosova would belong to Belgrade, as compensation for what Bulgaria had received in eastern Rumelia.¹²²⁴

Prior to it, an agreement for the partition of Albanian lands, Belgrade will also conclude with Cetina, on February 2, 1904. The agreement provided for the division of spheres of interest between the two countries. Thus, Serbia had to take the Vilayet of Kosova, Sanjak of the Pazari i Ri and a part of the Vilayet of Manastir.¹²²⁵

To prevent this development from turning into an open pact against reform, that is, against the mutual alliances of the three Balkan countries, two of which (Serbia and Bulgaria) were monitored by Russia, Austria-Hungary forced Russia to send a joint note to the governments of Belgrade, Sofia and Athens, asking them to suspend the activities of their squads in the reformist vilayets, because that threatened the breaking of the status quo, which the Great Powers still needed.¹²²⁶

In its response, Belgrade said it would work to implement the reforms, but reiterated its demand that the Kosova Vilayet (parts not included in the reform package) be included. Serbia announced that “*the gangs were not created by the neighboring states, but rather the violence of Albanians against Serbs and Christians there, as self-defense*”, which should be taken into account if order and calm were required in that part.¹²²⁷

The Sublime Porte appointed a commission headed by Ali Riza Pasha to reorganize the gendarmerie in the Vilayet of Kosova. According to Hilmi Pasha’s plan, it was made up of 2,800 people, 2% of whom would Christians, the number of police officers would be 202, while a campaign to collect taxes and disarm the population will be launched.¹²²⁸

The non-inclusion of the Kosova vilayet in the reforms, despite the first informal recognition of the Albanian ethnic identity by the Great Powers, will not spare it of double difficulties: those coming from the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian gangs, which had already begun to spread in many of its parts, and the efforts of the Sublime Porte to implement the reforms undertaken by the Great Powers, which mainly referred to those which Sultan Hamid had announced a year before through his decree for the creation of Rumelia’s “Megavilayet”.

These measures, especially disarmament, were met with protests and armed resistance by Albanians. It began spreading to many parts of Kosovo. Evidently, in Peja certain insurgent forces attacked the city prison demanding the removal of the Peja *Mutasarrif*. In Vushtrri, the *kaymakam* was killed and government officials were involved. Similar actions were taken in other parts.¹²²⁹

The Sublime Porte responded with an armed campaign led by Omer Pasha, who attacked Prizren and other parts of Dukagjin with 9 battalions, capturing more than 25 rebels and sending them to exile in Anatolia.¹²³⁰ 150 insurgents from Peja and 153 from Gjakova and the surrounding area will also be interned to Anatolia.¹²³¹

¹²²³ Čorović, Vladimir: “*Borba za nezavisnost Balkana*”, Beograd, p. 126.

¹²²⁴ Aleksić P, Liljana: “*O srpsko-Crnogorskim pregovorima o savezu 1904-1905*”, Istorija XX veka “*Zbornik radova*”, I, Beograd, 1959, p. 338, cited according to Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 199.

¹²²⁵ Idem, p. 199.

¹²²⁶ Jovanović, Jovan M: “*Borba za narodno ujedinjenja 1903-1908*”, Beograd, 1938, p. 147.

¹²²⁷ Idem, p. 148.

¹²²⁸ Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 200.

¹²²⁹ Idem, p. 201.

¹²³⁰ Kaleshi, Hasan/Jürgen, Hans: “*Vilajeti i Prizrenit*”, “*Përparimi*”, Prishtinë, 1967, no. 2-3, p. 187, and Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 2001.

¹²³¹ Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 201.

In parts of the Kosova Vilayet left out of the reforms, where the Ottoman government had oversight and pledged to implement reforms, the situation began to worsen after the intervention of Serbian consuls, who were already in Prishtina and interacting with Russian consuls, openly acting to organize the Serb population of Kosovo, which, although in the minority and privileged, with Serbian-Russian suggestions, created a *National Council*, which in addition to tax refusal, began to apply “*self-defense gangs*” on the grounds that it had to do its work when the Ottoman government failed to do so.¹²³²

In the *kazas* of Sjenica and Pazari i Ri (Yeni Pazar), the Slavic population refused to pay taxes and Serbian gangs continued their actions in these parts. On the atrocities, Austria-Hungary directly accused the Russian consul in Skopje, Orlov, and the Serbian consuls in Prishtina, who were said not paying attention to their region, but rather to that of Peja and Sjenica, where they encouraged the Serbian population to join insurgent factions.¹²³³

With great difficulty, the situation appeared in the areas of reform monitored by Austria-Hungary (Sanjak of Shkup). In the nine *kazas* of the Vilayet of Kosova, part of the reform areas, the organization of the gendarmerie did not go as planned, as the Albanian population was convinced that the new measures were not intended to improve the situation for all but for Christians only. These gained great privileges to their detriment, and so the ground was prepared for the partition of the country. This was justified by exempting Christians from taxes for a year and by the action of disarming the population to which Albanians were subject, while Serbs were excluded, even when they joined Serbian and Bulgarian gangs operating in the Shkup Karadak area as well as in the Presheva Valley.

However, new troubles, both for Albanians and for the Great Powers themselves, engaged in implementing reforms in the parts included under the Mursteg agreements, presented relations with the Ottoman Empire, which, in addition to military campaigns had to use the threat of weapons against Albanians - and it did so in a way mostly by turning them against itself, not caring less in implementing the economic and judicial package in accordance with the commitments made.

In fact, the economic package, provided for in the agreement, was not duly defined and the frameworks were insufficient to bring about a new situation, with the tax system being in the service of comprehensive reforms. This did not mean that the issues should not be clarified and put on the rails of a radical change that would be beneficial in the first place to the local population, so that it could gain back their trust on them. This was a prerequisite for any success. The Great Powers, although having their strategic interests in this area and acted in accordance with them, knew that it was the changes in the economic plan that could improve the situation. By that they would gain the trust of the local population, and they would not be possibly achieved without the sincere and determined cooperation of the Ottoman Empire.

In January 1905 the ambassadors of Austria-Hungary and Russia in Istanbul drafted a project of financial reforms for the three vilayets which were to be implemented in accordance with the Sublime Porte and the Ottoman Bank.¹²³⁴

According to the project, each *sanjak* and *kaza* had to have its own budget; revenues from the three vilayets and Thessaloniki Customs to rely on the Ottoman Bank branch in Thessaloniki, Manastir and Shkup. All revenues and expenditures should be made through this bank: paying the employees, army, gendarmerie, reform officers, etc. The vilayet budget had to be controlled by the Inspector General and civilian agents. The Sublime Porte accepted the Austrian-Russian project of financial reforms but on the condition that the great powers accept the increase of

¹²³² Perunović, Branko: “*Pisma srpskih konsula iz Prištine*”, Beograd, 1985.

¹²³³ Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 206.

¹²³⁴ Попов, Радослав: “*Австро-унгария и реформат в Европейска турция 1903-1908*”, София, 1974 (Popov, Radoslav: “*Austro-Ungarija i reformite v Evropskejska Turcija 1903-1908*”, Sofja, 1974), p. 110, and Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 211.

import customs from 8% to 11%, which at first was not acceptable.¹²³⁵ Later they will be accepted after some objections and disagreements which were not only of a principled nature, but also of a strategic one. Because, England was interested in the economic reforms not only remaining in the hands of Vienna and St. Petersburg, but under a greater international supervision, attended by representatives of the six Great Powers. This encouraged the Sublime Porte to maintain its authority as much as possible in these matters.¹²³⁶

In a way, Italy will join the position of England, being also not concerned with the dominating role of Austria-Hungary on this plain, afraid of the Vienna project for full involvement of Albania under its area of influence. With this, Rome was unable to penetrate the Balkans in accordance with its goals, which, as will be seen, will be very direct, especially against the Albanian space, including the efforts for alliances with the neighbors of the Albanians against whom it should have a position in accordance with that achieved within the Tripartite Associations. Here, too, Rome will join the compromise that will be reached with the formation of an International Financial Commission with civilian agents and members of the Great Powers.

In March 1905 the regulation of the duties of this commission, which was to function for two years based in Thessaloniki, was formulated. The international commission had six members: German baron - J.P. Grizinger, representative of France - L. Steeg, of Italy - F. Maissa, of England - Harvey, of Austria-Hungary - Openheimer, of Russia - N. Demernik, and of Turkey – Jamal Bey.

The commission will monitor the situation in the vilayets, control tax collection, clerks and other services. The financial regulation had 15 points, the most important of which were those of the Sublime Porte pledging to implement a new law on mines, on customs and the distribution of income in the vilayets of Rumelia, which would provide more income and development opportunities. The Great Powers accepted the main condition of the Sublime Porte to increase customs duties on imports from 8 to 11%.

But what constituted the “unity” of the Great Powers for financial and legal reforms, which would remain halfway, with the position of Austria-Hungary and Germany still prevailing, would be determined by the readiness of the Sublime Porte to make two important concessions: one for the construction of the Pazari i Ri railway (through Mitrovica connecting Bosnia and Herzegovina with Kosova and Thessaloniki), and the other, the Baghdad railway. Vienna managed to win the New Pazar-Kosovo railway concession through Macedonia to Thessaloniki, while Berlin won the Baghdad railway concession.¹²³⁷

These two concessions will have mutual effects for both the Great Powers and the Balkan countries, paving the way for the division of spheres of interest as well as their aggravation, with consequences leading to the Balkan Wars and World War One. Italy will be dissatisfied with the Balkan railway, as Austria-Hungary, through the Albanian vilayets, connected Bosnia and Herzegovina with Thessaloniki, reaching to the Aegean. While England will be dissatisfied with the Baghdad railway, where the Germans gained the main means of overseeing the great energy resources of the Middle East and strengthening their position there.

This was a good reason for the British to get rid of the Great Powers “harmony” over the preservation of the status quo at all costs and, perhaps, would have done so, had it not been for Russia’s weakened position after its war lost to Japan, which had fallen completely under the influence of Austria-Hungary and Germany in particular. Meanwhile, Russia’s weakening for the Sublime Porte and Britain’s inability to act on its own, had increased the Sublime Porte’s further commitment to relying on ties with Austria-Hungary and especially with Germany, as the capital

¹²³⁵ Pllana, Emin: “Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi”, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 211.

¹²³⁶ Idem.

¹²³⁷ Popov, Radoslav: “Austro-Ungarija i reformite v Evropskejska Turcija 1903-1908”, Sofja, 1974, p. 110

of these countries provided opportunities to regain the lost power, modernizing the country in line with German development concepts that were among the most dynamic in the West.

Even Sultan Hamid's absurd behavior becomes clear, demanding on the one hand to strengthen the caliphate through an Islamist spirit while continuing his despotic rule, on the other hand, making great efforts to modernize the Empire economically and financially according to the German model, which highlighted an effort for an organized western state governed by Eastern despotism.

In this spirit, he will allow new railway lines connecting the Balkans with the West (Bosnia-Kosovo-Thessaloniki railway) as well as the one to the east of Baghdad. Over the past five years, Sultan Hamid had two friendly meetings with German businessman Wilhelm II, signing several long-term trade and economic agreements and paving the way for German economic investment in the East, especially of the German capital. In addition to the agreements on modernization of the Ottoman army (in terms of military technology and its organization) for more than four years, which Germany had undertaken and the concessions of the Baghdad railway, which turned it into a major ally of the Empire, turned it into the main ally of the Ottoman Empire based on the modernization of the country.

The railway concessions that the Ottoman Empire will give to Vienna and Berlin will be met with great concern by the Balkan countries, especially Serbia. Belgrade will make successive deposits to Russia, and later to Italy, so that Austria-Hungary does not connect the Sarajevo-Yeni Pazar-Kosova-Shkup, and Thessaloniki railway line, as it disrupts regional balances and beyond, while helping "*Kosovo's peaceful occupation*" and its "*land connection with Bosnia and Herzegovina and through it with the German Europe*."¹²³⁸

Interestingly, the main supporters and even allies against the Austro-Hungarian railway project connecting Kosovo with Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus with Europe, Serbia will find among a large part of the feudal lords from the ranks of the Albanian leaders of Kosovo. They will become the main deterrent and inhibitors of the project bringing it to failure.

This failure will cost Albanians the most. It was quite natural that with the railway connection Pazari i Ri - Mitrovica - Prishtina - Shkup and Thessaloniki, Austria-Hungary would never allow an occupation of Kosovo by Serbia in 1912. And it would not agree to its remaining under Serbia at the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913. As such, it defended its strategic interests, which were related to the implementation of the railway.

So at a time when Belgrade did its best to thwart this project and declare it an "*Austro-German conspiracy against strategic Serbian interests*,"¹²³⁹ in Kosovo, launched by local feudal lords from the ranks of the country's heads and the Islamist clergy, protests and uprisings of Albanians against the European railway were organized. Large insurgent forces left Mitrovica for Prishtina and beyond, with the motive of stopping the northern railway.

Albanian feudal lords, along with others, opposed the railway on the grounds that it brought "*an internal collapse of the Empire by the Germans*" and thus the interests of the Albanians, while the Sublime Porte and Sultan Hamid himself saw this as an opportunity for a much larger development of its European vilayets as well as their better connection with the Ottoman Empire, as the railway through the Balkans enabled a faster circulation of goods in both directions.¹²⁴⁰

The opposition waged by the Albanians against the European railway, together with refusing to implement financial and legal reforms, turned them even more into the focus of Italy and its interests, which also coincided with the Serbian and Greek ones, also supported by the French and the British, who sought to prevent the great Austro-German rapprochement with the Ottomans, which also had Russian approval. At the same time, this caused further divisions

¹²³⁸ Jovanovic, Jovan M: "*Borba za narodna ujedinjanja 1903-1908*", Beograd, 1938, p. 148.

¹²³⁹ Idem, p. 149.

¹²⁴⁰ More about the protests and uprisings of Albanians against the construction of the northern railway see: HHStA, PA XII/ 312, Kral, Manastir, 3/2/1899, and "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 312-316.

among the Albanians themselves with the feudal lords and the fervent Islamist clergy from the ranks of the country's nobility looked increasingly to the Italians, as well as to the Serbs and Greeks for support. While the reformers (mainly intellectuals and representatives of the new bourgeoisie) were being supported by Austria-Hungary and Germany, although they did not easily cooperate with Vienna and Berlin, because, due to the Slav-Orthodox propaganda around Bosnia and Herzegovina, they were increasingly condemned by their chiefs and the current of the feudal lords and the Islamist clergy "*as swallowers of the Ottoman Empire*".

Eventually, all those developments emerging following the Mursteg Agreement up to the Young Turks Revolution of 1908, determined by both internal and external circumstances, also influenced the further positioning of the Albanian National Movement, so that it be submitted to them. So it is noticeable that the demand for equality within the Ottoman Empire, with the creation of Albanian autonomy as the nucleus of the autonomous Albanian state, a request that ever since the Albanian League of Prizren turned into a political program and enjoying popular support, began to fall to a second plain, or be replaced altogether by that "of national liberation", rather as a slogan than a result of a platform relying on certain programs enjoying national consent. It will be a whole generation of patriots with radical views, mainly from the middle class (teachers of Turkish schools, civil servants, journalists and young intellectuals), but also the military dissatisfied with the appearance of Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian gangs who were plunging the country into chaos and unstoppable bloodshed mainly to the detriment of the Muslim population, who took the initiative to establish a secret organization taking over an armed struggle against the gangs and comitas.¹²⁴¹

Viewed from the perspectives of events and developments that already determined the social and political topicality of the vilayets intertwined with the issue of Macedonia, where the concentration of the Great Powers and of the Ottoman Empire, had focused on caring for Christian peoples (Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians), while the Albanian population (of the Muslim faith, as well as Christians) were neglected or treated headlong in accordance with the interests of the Christian peoples, who in these vilayets nevertheless appeared as a minority, there was reason for concern and even response. This happened through protests, revolts and uprisings continuing especially in the Vilayet of Kosova.

The popular movements in the Vilayet of Kosova, in the part left out of the reforms (which included a few large sanjaks, such as that of Prishtina and others stretching from the border with Serbia in the north and south to the border with Bulgaria), and in the context of the area falling within the zone of reforms overseen by Austria-Hungary (the Sanjak of Shkup and a few *kazas* of the Vilayet of Manastir) – clashing with the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers even when they maintained political demands for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire - not only did not improve the situation, but they deepened the dissatisfaction of the population, convinced that Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks were being offered as much concessions as possible so that their gangs could freely act in favor of causing chaos.

“MANASTIR COMMITTEE” AND THE ARMED STRUGGLE

In the face of these circumstances - whereas the sanjaks that had already been declared as “Macedonian” with various clashing Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Aromanian propaganda - Albanian nationalists were necessarily influenced by the Slav-Macedonian movements and their methods of warfare by means of gangs. The Austrian Deputy Consul in Manastir, Kral, rightly noted the influence of the Bulgarian movement on some Albanians, especially among officials

¹²⁴¹ HHSa, PA XII/ 312, Kral, Manastir, 3/2/1899.

and the military.¹²⁴² Even later, Vienna will be informed of the closeness between Albanian and Bulgarian Christians, who were increasingly involved in the activities of their clubs, rather than conducting an Albanian national propaganda. The Austro-Hungarian Consul, Kral, announced that Albanians will also begin to organize in secret committees under the influence and supervision of the Bulgarian movement.¹²⁴³

The model of gangs and committees, already introduced by Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria in the part of the Vilayet of Thessaloniki inhabited by the Slavic-Bulgarian majority, will soon be accepted by a part of Albanians of the Vilayet of Manastir, even though Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, through the comita movement, aimed at causing chaos to force international intervention, which would consequently divide this space into three parts (Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian) which would exclude Albanians and, above all, to disable any project for an autonomous Albanian state.

The model of “liberation war” with the help of gangs and comitas will be supported by some radical circles within the Young Turk Movement of revolutionary orientations, who were also interested in the fight to overthrow Sultan Hamid’s despotism to bring into play armed groups from the ranks of Albanians, disgruntled Ottoman officers and other soldiers of Albanian descent, interested in thus accelerating the revolution with which the Young Turks would come to power.¹²⁴⁴

In fact, it may not be a coincidence that senior officers (Colonel Halil Bey Berzeshta, from the 3rd Corps of the Manastir and others) were found at the head of the Manastir Committee, who succeeded in modeling the liberation war through gangs and armed groups, in the triangle meeting of the Vilayets of Kosova, Manastir and Thessaloniki, to entirely do away with that of the great popular uprisings that had taken place by Albanians since the Eastern Crisis onwards. Especially since the “Albanian League of Prizren” of 1878 onwards they had found great support from the intellectual elite in Istanbul and the Diaspora (Romania, Egypt and the Italian-Arbëresh) relying on a nationwide political program standing for an Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and not its downfall in accordance with the interests of the Slavic-Orthodox countries, where the Albanians were the biggest losers.

The clandestine (illegal) war by unknown gangs and comitas, albeit with an attractive motto “for national liberation” brought about an atmosphere of chaos and insecurity, just as befitted Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, whose invisible fingers could be introduced from all sides and the Albanians could be playing their cards even while thinking theirs was a high degree of patriotic sacrifice.

This strategy by the neighbors of Albanians, openly displaying claims against their vilayets seeing an opportunity for their partition, could not succeed without the concept of chaos, according to which, what in turn was projected as Macedonia had to turn into a “*typical Balkan café*”, where everyone kills everyone without first knowing where the bullets came from. The only clarity from this ambiguity was that it had to do with preventing the creation of an autonomous Albanian state. Many Albanians will join this Balkan oath, consciously or without it, as in the circumstances when European powers were focusing on the factors of the crisis and those that produced them, they found it difficult to escape the provocation of a “Balkan café” already happening to them, with the intrusion of Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek troops in their lands. The many killings, oppression and chaos caused by their activities will force many patriots

¹²⁴² See: HHSStA, PA XII/ 312, Kral, Manastir, 3/2/1899.

¹²⁴³ Idem.

¹²⁴⁴ More about the revolutionary spirit of the Young Turks and its acceptance by Albanian groups see at Prifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*”, Prishtinë 1996, pp. 106-108; Wernicke, Annemali: “*Teodor Ipen dhe Shqipëria në fokusin e Perandorisë Austrohungareze*”, Tiranë, 2012.

to act in accordance with this development. Thus, the activity of the Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian gangs will be accompanied by that of the Albanians.¹²⁴⁵

Whether this was rather a necessary response to a disruptive and destructive activity coming from abroad, or was it part of a new strategy that changed the character of the Albanian National Movement, shifting it from the demand for equality, as defined to Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, to a liberation war against the Ottoman Empire, there was something of both.

But the latter will come to the fore, whereas the current course of the Albanian autonomous state was replaced almost unilaterally by that of the liberation war against the Ottoman Empire, waged through illegal methods and outside any central supervision, without national consensus or support from the “Istanbul Committee”, which represented the intellectual and political core of the National Movement, since the emergence of the “Albanian League of Prizren” and onward.

This orientation confronted the northwestern parts (the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Shkodra) with the south-eastern ones (the Vilayet of Manastir and that of Janina), or the Gëgs with the Tosks. As the former still maintained the course of popular movements (protests, uprisings and armed struggle as it happened during the “Albanian League of Prizren” led by its army under the Provisional Government command). The latter had embraced *revolutionary clandestineity* as a Slav-Orthodox model of two goals: overthrowing the Ottoman Empire by internal chaos and obstructing any Albanian autonomy that could emerge from it.

The model of *revolutionary clandestineity* (illegality), prevailing in these parts, and the program of the first secret Albanian Committee “For the freedom of Albania”, founded in Manastir in November 1905 on the initiative of Bajram (Bajo) Topulli, Deputy Director of the Turkish Gymnasium of Manastir, where Halil Bërzeshta, Colonel and Head of the Pharmaceutical Service of 3rd Corporation, Fehmi Zavalani - owner, Sejvi Vllamasi (Novosela) - veterinarian of the city of Manastir, Gjergj Qiriazhi - translator of the Austrian consulate in that city and Jashar Bitincka - high school teacher, all these patriots of a local level, admitting they had not consulted with the Istanbul Committee.¹²⁴⁶

The program of the “*Canonism*” (*Kanonizma*) Committee, through the creation of patriotic detachments and their armed struggle anticipated the liberation of Albania from Ottoman occupation, although the demands for education in the Albanian language and other issues were not given up, paved the way for agreements with the Ottoman government, which had to be enforced through threat of arms.

In order to spread throughout the country, the “Manastir Committee” sent its representatives to the various provinces of Northern, Central and Southern Albania establishing contacts with dozens of Albanian patriots who supported its national program. The Committee established relations with patriotic associations abroad, especially those in Bucharest and Sofia, which supported their program and activities, as they were in line with the official policies of these countries (Bulgaria and Romania), with each in its own way trying to take advantage of the Balkan cake by instrumentalizing Albanian as much as possible, despite the fact that they were somehow forced to react.

Of course, in these circumstances, the program of the “Manastir Committee”, which remained almost neglected in most of the Vilayet of Kosova and Shkodra, was not supported by Vienna, which was not interested in the Albanian issue being an instrument of the Slav-Orthodox countries, especially Serbia, to be used for their own needs, as was the case with the Macedonian crisis, where Albanians could be the biggest losers. In an instruction that Goluhovsky, the foreign minister, gave to the Austrian consulates in Albania in April 1906, it was stated that the

¹²⁴⁵ According to official Austrian records during the years 1905-1907, in the Vilayet of Manastir, in the Sanjak of Shkup of the Vilayet of Kosova, in the Sanjak of Korça, and in the southern part of the Vilayet of Janina, on the border with Greece, various gangs killed over 3800 people, or one killed in 1500 people. (See: HHStA, PA XII/ 312).

¹²⁴⁶ Idem.

revolutionary aims of the Committee should be rejected, demanding that *“it not go beyond the limits of the peaceful path and not exhort to the use violence.”*¹²⁴⁷

Vienna, however, supported the cultural program of the “Manastir Committee” and promised financial assistance to set up schools, pay teachers, publish Albanian books, support the girls’ school in Korça and increase the number of students.

Unlike the “Manastir Committee”, already operating in the “liberation war” concept, from the models of the Slav-Orthodox strategies (Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians who led their statehood movements on them), mass protests and uprisings continued in Kosovo against the implementation of the reforms by the Sublime Porte, especially those aimed at collecting taxes and disarming the population.

In the autumn of 1905, unrest erupted in Gjakova, Peja and Prizren, protesting, in addition to well-known political demands, against the new taxes that were increasingly heavy. But they calmed down to some extent, as the Sublime Porte announced an amnesty for political internees from Peja, Gjakova, Prizren and Luma. In spring, however, they returned with the population facing new taxes on livestock, education and the purchase of weapons for the Ottoman army. The Dukagjin uprisings, which in the first match with the Ottoman troops left 50 killed and over 200 wounded, spread to the Sanjak of Prishtina. The situation calmed down when the Sublime Porte, after an intervention by Isa Boletini (who at the time had returned from a four-year stay in Istanbul as head of the Sultan’s palace), promised to waive the collection of new taxes.¹²⁴⁸

Giving up tax collection in parts of the Kosova Vilayet excluded from the reforms will happen. The Ottoman Empire, as promised by Isa Boletini, decided not to ask for additional taxes during that year. This brought some fragile peace, which in Kosovo lasted throughout the year, although it continued to be provoked by Serbian and Bulgarian troops occupying the northern and eastern parts of Kosovo. Belgrade’s well-known two-faced stance contributed to that, by formally accepting reforms and even supporting them, provided they expanded into Kosovo, and on the other hand by encouraging their activity by introduction of armed groups from Serbia. The situation will be aggravated in the part of Mitrovica and Sjenica by successive attacks on police stations and citizens’ property of which, again, Belgrade propaganda blamed Albanians.

However, the situation between the Albanian parts outside the reforms (most of the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Shkodra) and those involved in the reforms (the Shkup Sanjak from the Vilayet of Kosova, the Vilayet of Manastir and most of the Vilayet of Janina), appeared with noticeable changes. In the space outside the reforms, however, the Ottoman government had supervision, while in the space distributed under Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Italian supervision, the situation was becoming increasingly turbulent. The reason for this, on the one hand, were the difficulties that European powers, authorized to implement reforms, faced in various parts being rejected by the local population, which reacted to them in accordance with the instructions it received from abroad (Serbs from Serbia, Greeks from Greece and Macedonians from Bulgaria). But, on the other hand, there was also an increased activity of the armed detachments, which were already fighting rather against each other than against the Ottoman or foreign powers.

In the circumstances, the Committee *“For the freedom of Albania”* came up with a platform for the creation of *“armed troops”*, as the armed groups were called in this document. The troops would spread to the mountains of Albania, but would also have their own secret armed units in the country’s villages. Thus, the first detachment was created in April 1906 in Kolonjë of Korça, with 20 fighters under the command of Bajo Topulli. Another group was formed in Kolonjë, commanded by Fehmi Zavalani and Sali Butka.¹²⁴⁹

¹²⁴⁷ *“Historia e Popullit Shqiptar”*, Tiranë, 2002, p. 318.

¹²⁴⁸ Idem, p. 318.

¹²⁴⁹ Idem, p. 320.

The radius of Albanian detachments appeared from Kolonja of Korça to Gora and Leskovik with the tendency of expanding to other parts. Even its first actions were extended to this part with the assassination attempt on the Greek Metropolitan of Korça, Foti, being among the most noted, carried out by Bajo Topulli's squad and taking place, as it were said, in revenge for the massacre of patriot Papa Kristo Negovani and his fellow villagers by the Greek chauvinist clergy.

The Ottoman government responded to the activity of the Albanian troops with great severity and efficiency. After several matches with various groups, in which the reserve units of the Manastir garrison took part, the Ottoman government forces managed to expel the Albanian troops, destined to such a thing lacking a "strong back", as the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek factions had, which, when threatened by Ottoman punishment, withdrew quickly to Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, where they found protection. Meanwhile, the Albanian groups did not have any support even in parts of Kosovo, because the "freedom squads" and "comitas" were mostly identified with the Serbian and Bulgarian ones, with whom they had a bad experience, as being directly observed and led by Belgrade and the Serbian Orthodox Church that housed them.

Thus, during July 1906, the Ottoman military authorities were able to imprison a large number of activists of the "Manastir Committee" and their supporters without much effort. Among those arrested were many officers of the military garrison of Manastir and officers of the state apparatus who had joined the Committee. In January 1907, the names of the patriots were announced in the official newspaper of the Vilayet of Manastir, who had to be handed over and arrested as soon as caught, among whom were Bajo and Çerçiz Topulli, Beqir and Sali Butka, Islam Anfi, Ahmet Zylfiqari, Dervish Ismaili, Fejzo Beu, Mersin Abdyli, and others.

This prompted many of those who had formed squads or headed the "Manastir Committee" to leave the country. Among them were Bajo and Çerçiz Topulli, who left for Sofia and Bucharest. Idriz Efendi Gjakova and several other comrades at arms settled in Bulgaria (Ruschuk).¹²⁵⁰

The fleeing of the Topulli brothers to Sofia and Bucharest (until 1907, from where they passed to Paris and the United States of America), except that it left a turbulent situation in parts of Albania, with the revolutionary activity of the squads, which for the most part, suited the Bulgarians and Greeks to exploit it to their own needs, clearly showed the weaknesses and difficulties of the clandestine war against open activity, such as that of popular protests and uprisings as followed by the Albanian National Movement in its inception (on the occasion of the Albanian League of Prizren), followed by political demands for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

The actions of the Albanian armed detachments, without a clear address from within and with the motto of the liberation war against the Ottoman Empire outside a nationwide consent, not only failed to find external support, but they were viewed with suspicion, instrumentalized in the first place by Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. These states will also try to exploit the Albanian clandestineity for their own accounts: by using them from within, while discrediting them abroad.

On these foreign interests, under the slogan "for liberation" against the Ottoman Empire, the Albanian National Movement, led by the "Istanbul Committee", for the first time was challenged by an internal rivalry on the basis of foreign interests, reflected in alliances, which outside its control were linked on one side with the Bulgarians and on the other with the Greeks, where local leaders Bajo Topulli and others, through illegal gangs tried to side with the national leaders, Ismail Qemali, Hasan Prishtina, and others, who continued to hold the Albanian National Movement's legitimate demand for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

Willingly or unwillingly, forced by the special circumstances arising, or by foreign interests, this was the first match between the concept of an Albanian national state, to be

¹²⁵⁰ Idem, p. 320.

achieved through equality and political and diplomatic means including popular resistance, and that of liberation from the Ottoman occupation by means of armed warfare by clandestine groups connected with Sofia, Belgrade and Athens and their interests. This will have consequences for the Albanians themselves, as more than ever it took them out of the framework of the interests of the Great Powers, where they stood, bringing them to those of the neighboring states, where they could expect nothing but becoming their prey.

This was a dangerous turn, which, however, would be thwarted by Austria-Hungary, the moment it seemed to have begun to take the tragic epilogue seeing that the Albanians and their cause, for which it had clear strategic interests and had invested for long to keep them in it, they were falling prey to Slav-Russian politics.

Before coming to this outcome, Vienna had many arguments that Sofia and Bucharest, which followed the line of increasingly fierce rivalry with Serbia and Greece over the greater share Bulgaria should have in Macedonia, had already drawn up plans to encourage Albanian detachments in the vilayet of Manastir and Kosova in order to prevent the influence of Serbia and Greece in these parts, even though Bulgaria had signed an agreement with Serbia to share their interests in the vilayets of Manastir, Kosova, and Thessaloniki by which Kosova and Manastir were to belong to Serbia, while a large part of the vilayet of Thessaloniki was annexed to Bulgaria.¹²⁵¹

That Sofia did not hide these intentions was best illustrated by the proposal made by Bulgarian Minister Genadiev to Bajo Topulli to establish co-operation between the Albanian and Bulgarian insurgent factions. Bulgaria announced it would take over the supply of Albanian troops with weapons. The Albanian-Bulgarian alliance also had to be supported by the Vlachs, of which Romania was interested. The Albanian colony in Sofia and the one in Romania were very interested in this cooperation providing broad support.¹²⁵²

Sofia's "*Drita*" newspaper, led by Shahin Kolonja, was the most powerful voice for the alliance. Constantly emphasizing Bulgaria's interest in dividing Macedonia with Albanians, it turned into an outlet for the Committee "*For the Freedom of Albania*". Çerçiz Topulli, in his article "*Feelings of a patriot*" raised his voice about the need "*for Tosk and Gheg, Christians and Muslims, to go to the mountains, to fight to the death, making the voice of the uprising heard from Preveza to the borders of Serbia and Montenegro.*"¹²⁵³

This and other newspapers ("*Kombi*" - Boston and "*Shpresa e Shqypnisë*" ("Albania's Hope"- Ragusa-Trieste-Rome) carried similar articles, but not everywhere supported or met with a positive echo. Because, not all Albanian patriots held the same attitude towards the armed struggle of the gangs, especially when realizing whose fingers had been mixed in them and what it meant to give up the concept of creating an autonomous Albanian state within The Ottoman Empire in favor of independence from the Ottoman Empire through a "liberation war", which, even if internal conditions existed, would not be allowed by the neighboring state or Russia, except that it would be used as an alibi for the partitioning of Albanian lands, as will actually happen during the First Balkan War.

Faik Konica, in his magazine "*Albania*", among the main outlets of the Albanian press, published several articles against the option of the liberation war through the gangs. In some articles ("*Final Thoughts of the Year*", "*Bajo Topulli and the Politics of Assassins*"), he will call the war by means of invisible bands "*useless and harmful*".

¹²⁵¹ More on treaties between Serbia and Bulgaria, and Montenegro see: Čorović, Vladimir: "*Borba za nezavisnost Balkana*", Beograd, 1936, pp. 112-127; Jovanović, Jovan M.: "*Borba za narodno ujedinjanje 1903-1908*", Beograd, 1938; Aleksić P. Liljana: "*O sprsko-crnogorskom programu o savezu 1904-1905*", Beograd, 1965; Dragnich, A. N: and Todorovich, S: "*The Saga of Kosovo: Focus on Serbian-Albanian Relations*", New York, 1984.

¹²⁵² See newspaper "*Drita*", Sofia, December, 1906.

¹²⁵³ "*Drita*", December 1906, Sofia.

As a senior intellectual and a good connoisseur of diplomatic games, especially those associated with the numerous conspiracies by Albanian neighbors to use them for their own purposes, Konica emphasized:

*“The shortest and best way for the liberation of Albania is the spread of Albanian reading and writing, knowledge and wisdom to the people.”*¹²⁵⁴

As expected, in addition to Bulgaria, Greece will also show interest in Albanian troops and the involvement of Albanians in the model of further destabilization of the Ottoman Empire in Macedonia. This was also expected, because Athens, too, constantly claimed to appropriate a good part of the Albanian territories. For this purpose it played with the card of the Arvanites (indigenous Albanians in Attica, Morea and the Aegean Islands), but also of the Albanians of the Orthodox faith in the Vilayet of Janina, who made up the majority of the population in many *kazas* of the vilayet, and in the fierce war between the Bulgarian exarchate and the Greek Patriarchate, they had taken the side of the latter, especially in southern and central Albania, whereby in order to avoid any identification with the Slav-Macedonians, the Albanian Orthodox opted towards the Greek church and Hellenism, although behind it lay Hellenism and Greek interests.

After Athens' attempts to spread the idea of a “Greek-Albanian dualist kingdom” to include them in its Hellenizing projects failed, the country's policy, in line with the latest developments, came out with the demand for the establishment of a new Greek-Albanian alliance, which, as stated, was in the interest of both peoples. In addition to the “*Albanian-Greek League*”, which organized the Arvanitas, the “*O Ellenismos*” (Hellenism) Association, led by Neoklis Kazazis (Nikolla Kazazi), an Arvanitas, a professor of high social reputation in Greece, began working in Athens.

This association's program, as it was said, contained “*the efforts of both peoples to engage in common interests*”. On these principles, “*O Ellenismos*” published a pamphlet addressed to the “*Albanian brothers of Albania*”, written by Sekos, Boçari, and Xhavella, well-known Arvanitas, who came from families that had contributed to the creation of the Greek state.¹²⁵⁵

The ideas elaborated in “*O Ellenismos*” are as follows: sons of Alexander the Great and Skanderbeg, all Albanians were brothers, all nations were recognizing a renaissance, but Albanians found it impossible to live alone and form a state of their own because they were very poor and had neither literature nor a single religion; given that Albanians and Greeks had a common history - the Arvanites had liberated Greece and “*the Greek before becoming Greek had been Albanian, namely Pelasgian*” - it would be natural for a common future, in the form of a Greco-Albanian kingdoms according to the Austro-Hungarian model.¹²⁵⁶ The conclusion drawn was clear: “*Look, brethren, how important reasons we have to join the Greeks and none to support the Italian, Austrian, Vlach, Montenegrin, Serbian or Bulgarian yoke.*”¹²⁵⁷

Initially, Ismail Qemali will be guided by these principles. Aiming to secure its support against the possible Slavic invasion by Serbia and Bulgaria, which violated Albanian interests in the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir, and the Greek ones in Macedonia, he managed to conclude an agreement on Albanian-Greek cooperation.¹²⁵⁸

Ismail Qemali had started the first talks about an Albanian-Greek alliance earlier, during his first stay in Athens, in 1900, immediately after emigrating from the Ottoman Empire. From that time onwards, during his stay outside Turkey (until 1908), there is much evidence that he regularly received significant sums of money from Greece.¹²⁵⁹

¹²⁵⁴ “*Albania*”, no. 8, and no. 11/1906.

¹²⁵⁵ “*Prokirixi tou Arvanitikou sindesmou tis Athinas pros tus Aderfous arvanaites tis Arvanitias*”, Athens, (Etarireia “*O Ellenismos*”), p. 19, in HHStA, PA XXXVIII/443.

¹²⁵⁶ Idem.

¹²⁵⁷ See: “*Prokirixi tou Arvanitikou sindesmou tis Athinas pros tus Aderfous arvanaites tis Arvanitias*”, Athina, (Etarireia “*O Ellenismos*”), p. 19, in HHStA, PA XXXVIII/443.

¹²⁵⁸ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 328.

¹²⁵⁹ Clyer, Nathalie: “*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 449.

In 1906, I. Qemali held several conversations about this issue with the president of “*O Ellenismos*” (Hellenism) Nikolla Kazazi and other Greek personalities. A little later, in February 1907, they ended up with an Albanian-Greek alliance or league. Its main theses were announced in a special manifesto on April 4, 1907. The communiqué published in the Athens press was made on behalf of the “*Committee of the Greek-Albanian League*”.¹²⁶⁰

Both documents emphasized the common interest of Greeks and Albanians, as the most ancient peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, in defending themselves from a future Bulgarian-Serbian aggression. Both Albanians and Greeks pledged to respect the *status quo* in the East, supporting the reforms of the Great Powers, but on the condition that they be more radical and equally for all the peoples of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁶¹

According to B. Kondis, the Greek government befriended Ismail Qemali in order to reach a secret agreement, which would decide the future border between Greece and Albania, in exchange for the support that the Greek state would give to the creation of an independent Albania. At the same time, according to the Greek consul in Shkodra, Greece had planned to open an Albanian department at the University of Athens in order to establish a bilingual newspaper dedicated to promoting the achievement of an agreement thus gaining the trust of the Albanians in Greek politics, which could only be proved by such actions.¹²⁶²

But, before drying on the agreement that Ismail Qemali had signed with the Greeks over the Albanian-Greek alliance, the Greek Prime Minister Teodokis, during a meeting with the Vienna envoy to Athens, openly expressed Greek claims about Epirus (Southern Albania), with the official Athens proving once more that it was not in their best interest to reach an agreement with the Albanians, but rather use them for its own purposes.¹²⁶³

The cooperation and alliance that Ismail Qemali established with Greece, although it never had any binding power for Albanians, as no Albanian association or committee stood behind the “signature”, was opposed by Albanian patriotic circles, especially Faik Konica, part of the Italian-Arbëresh press and those in Sofia and Bucharest, the latter supporting an alliance of Albanians with Bulgaria.

Shahin Kolonja’s newspaper “*Drita*” appeared very harsh in condemning any kind of connection with the Greeks, as it also saw Serbian interests behind, being in harmony with each other against the Albanian cause.

Ismail Qemali as a professional diplomat and an accomplished politician, who sought to find the most appropriate interest between the balances of the Great Powers and the Balkans, calculated of a possible alliance between Greeks and Albanians was also in the interest of the British and Italians. They already had this in mind and in a way even played on this card. He finally realized that even when Greece had to fight for its own accounts in relation to Serbia and Bulgaria and - it could do so by relying on Albanians - it was easier to accept sacrificing Albanians for the benefit of Serbs or Bulgarians than gain them over to himself, recognizing their rights. This made Ismail Qemali to finally turn to Austria-Hungary and rely on it, as the only one that in those circumstances could help the Albanians not to be prey to their known neighbors and their traps.

After spending time in Sofia and several other countries, it was Bajo Topulli who realized that different parts of the ranks of the Albanian National Movement in those very dramatic circumstances could act head-on and naively involve themselves in the Macedonian cause to become part of foreign interests. Under the impact of circumstances and, seeing that the Albanians and their cause were under constant pressure of manipulation from abroad, especially from neighboring countries, whose major interest ran against Albanians gaining their freedom and independence, but rather to divide their lands, Bajo Topulli, stated to the Vienna

¹²⁶⁰ “*Histori e popullit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 328.

¹²⁶¹ Idem, p. 328.

¹²⁶² Clayer, Nathali: “*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 450.

¹²⁶³ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 328.

representatives in 1907 that, “*the situation in Albania was not yet ripe for a general uprising*”, but to prepare it, committees “*For the Freedom of Albania*” would continue to organize armed detachments, which, however, would not take terrorist acts and would be dealing with the spread of national ideas of Albanians.”¹²⁶⁴

In those critical years, the Albanians opting for war through gangs and clandestine actions, understood very well that they found it difficult to escape the manipulations coming from the rivalries between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. To avoid this trap that kept the well-known political compass of the Albanian National Movement - for Albanian autonomy, facing the Young Turk Committee to bring down Sultan Hasid’s despotic rule, but not the Ottoman Empire, as the Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians demanded, was of help.

ALBANIANS AND THE FOUNDING OF THE “UNITY AND PROGRESS” COMMITTEE

As the Macedonian crisis had created a fertile ground for the spread of various committees whose purpose was to bring down the Ottoman Empire by causing general chaos, it was only natural that there should be room for a “*Unity and Progress*” Committee (UPC), which after a merging of the “*Ottomans of Freedom*” and “*Progress and Unity*” societies in September 1907, appeared in a triple role:

- fight for the return of the constitutional order by overthrowing Hamidic despotism,
- fight the activity of Serbian, Greek and Bulgarian gangs and
- at the same time protect the Ottoman Empire from destruction.

The “*Unity and Progress*” Committee had achieved this platform time ago and after unification it was natural to pay great attention to receiving Albanian support, being fully aware of the fact that without the support of the Albanian population, which constituted a significant part of the Muslim population in the European provinces, success would be unlikely.¹²⁶⁵

In the prevailing circumstances, the interests of the Albanians, to a large extent, coincided with those of the Young Turks. This was clear by the involvement of Albanians in this movement from its first appearance in 1889 onwards, even by being its founders, helping it to extend and elevate it at all stages.

At the Paris Congress in December 1907, the Young Turks reconfirmed their position on Albanian support doing so by addressing them in a statement in Albanian, which was of great significance, announcing that in case of a victory the Albanians would enjoy equal treatment with the rest, which was one of the main demands of Albanians in their struggle for autonomy. ..

If it was obvious that Sultan Hamid knew the importance of Albanians, that he considered them supporters of the Ottoman Empire in the European part, while only forbidding them from showing their national identity and depriving them of the few rights he had originally allowed them in the field of emancipation, then this initial communication in Albanian by the Young Turks was a great mutual turn for closeness and trust, which was necessary for the Albanians to join the opposition movement and with it harmonize and coordinate their political, social and cultural demands. In Paris, it was also argued that armed resistance to the government’s repressive policies was supported, which allowed for the use of revolutionary violence against Sultan Hamid, which had until then been ruled out.

This was important for the Albanians, especially for that part described by the revolutionary spirit that had already been involved in this development with their troops, and that the course of interaction with the Young Turks for the preservation of the caliphate and the call

¹²⁶⁴ Idem, p. 323.

¹²⁶⁵ Gawrych, Georg: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe Shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 222.

for a government elected by a parliament, would replace the despotic regime,¹²⁶⁶ detaching them from being a tool in the hands of the Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks, who were very much interested in including the Albanians in the game of Balkan chaos. While it also removed the fear among the fanatical part that the return of the constitution and parliamentarism would not mean the overthrow of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, and with it the return of secularism. Indeed, the reconciling tones about preserving the Sultanate and restoring constitutional order will be reconciliatory to the Albanians themselves, divided into the pro Sultan and opposition camps.

Since all three of these principles were acceptable to Albanians as well, they coincided with the determination that their interests be resolved within the Ottoman Empire, possibly in agreement with it and the Great Powers, as supervisors, and not through its immediate overthrow, as by doing so they threatened to turn into a prey to the neighboring countries, many Muslim Albanians lined up with Young Turk networks, especially in the Vilayet of Kosova and in the sanjaks where there was a Macedonian minority, but also in the Vilayet of Janina and, to a lesser extent, in the Vilayet of Shkodra. In particular, military and civil servants became members of various branches of the (UPC) that were being established everywhere. This social stratum was not only directly confronted with the war against the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek factions to stop the chaos in which the country was sinking, but it understood best that it was the Albanians who would fall prey to this development if it were that it would continue even further.

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In Shkup, the son of a leader, Nexhip Draga, a former student of *Mulkiye*, became one of the strongmen of the “*Progress and Unity*” Committee (PUC). In Mitrovica, Sylejman Kylçe, a young officer from Tetova, also joined the local cell.¹²⁶⁷

The Young Turk Committees were joined and being propagated by the Bektashi throughout Kosovo. They were an important factor in paving the way for further unification of Albanians with the Young Turks, knowing that this sect, brutally overthrown by Sultan Mahmud II in 1826, supported the Albanian National Movement and its efforts for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

However, that part of the Albanian National Movement, which had taken the lead in the liberation war determined to launch Albanian troops against the Ottoman Empire, practically being implicated in the Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian rivalry, after the emergence of the Center of Society “*Progress and Unity*” in Thessaloniki in the summer of 1906, playing the role of a central committee for European Turkey and carrying out extensive propaganda in the vilayets of Rumelia, had to decide either for cooperation and interaction with the Young Turks or for war against them.

The latter also meant splitting from the main leaders of the Albanian National Movement and its well-known course on Albanian equality and autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, because the “*Progress and Unity*” Society, not only was founded by many Albanian patriots led by Ibrahim Temo, but they continued to be its leaders, such as Ismail Qemali, Hasan Prishtina and others, who tried to align the Albanian interest in the movement.

With an aggravation of the Macedonian crisis, conditioned by the intensification of the activities of Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek gangs in the Albanian vilayets, threatening an outbreak of inter-Balkan conflict and consequently separation of this part from the Ottoman Empire and its division between Balkan countries according to an already known scenario based on mutual agreements (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece), already “revolutionary” Albanians had to

¹²⁶⁶ Idem, p. 222.

¹²⁶⁷ Clayer, Nathali: “*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 514.

choose between the Albanian interest, which in those circumstances was in line with that of the Young Turks (overthrow of Sultan Hamid's absolutism and restoration of constitutional order, which also meant the protection of the Ottoman Empire from fragmentation), and that of further instrumentalization by Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks, without any guarantee that anything could be gained except immersion in a state of complete insecurity, which could follow the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

This dilemma was surpassed in December 1907, after the Second Congress of Young Turks in Paris, accepting the armed uprising as a means of war limited against the Sultan's absolutism and for the restoration of the constitution.¹²⁶⁸

This was an important "compromise" as Albanian and other factions were given an opportunity to continue to practice their "revolutionarity". This time not for a "liberation" war and bringing down the Ottoman Empire, as the Balkan states aimed (Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria) led by Russia, but rather to fight Sultan Hamid's despotism and restore parliamentarism. In other words, a "democratic revolution".

The new option, as well as the promises made to Albanians, Macedonians and others by the Paris Congress on being granted "*freedom, equality, fraternity and justice*" alongside a constitution, gave the Young Turk an upper hand in getting these peoples' support, particularly of Albanians, that will be decisive for the final direction of the revolution.¹²⁶⁹

In the spring and summer of 1908, in a series of cities in Albania: Ohri, Prespa, Struga, Manastir, Shkup, Gjirokastra, Shkodra, Prizren, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, etc., in addition to the national committees "*For the freedom of Albania*", also Young Turk committees of "Union and Progress". Both Albanian intellectuals and officers had a place in them. It was a successful attempt by the legitimate opposition movement, such as the one led by the Young Turks (where Albanians played an important role), to gain over and be able to monitor "illegal revolutionaryism", not only over the gangs and comitas from the ranks of Albanians and Slav-Macedonians, but also that seemed to appear as an open revolt from the ranks of the Ottoman military dissatisfied with the chaotic situation in Macedonia. Thus, the Young Turks achieved greater success in the military units, especially among Albanian officers and soldiers, who were aware that their rebellion should be used and directed to restore constitutional order and not bring down the Ottoman Empire.

Based on these attitudes, most of the Albanian officers of the Shkup garrison supported the Young Turks movement. The same happened in many garrisons of the Second Army of Thessaloniki, considered the best militarily prepared and responsible for the protection of the European parts of the Empire.

After the proclamation distributed by the Albanian military, Colonel Ahmet Njaziu, and the "Union and Progress" Committee in the first days of July 1908 throughout the towns and villages of Albania, announcing that their goal was to declare the constitution and, by this act, "*provide for liberty, equality, fraternity and justice for all the peoples of the Empire, regardless of religion.*"¹²⁷⁰ Albanians were promised to be exempted from taxes and spared of arbitrariness of officials. Thus, the Albanian revolutionary-inspired movement began to break away from the Balkan network of clandestine activity of combat of gangs and comitas according to the Serbian,

¹²⁶⁸ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 373.

¹²⁶⁹ *Idem*, p. 375.

¹²⁷⁰ Colonel *Ahmet Njaziu*, was a soldier of Albanian origin who became one of the heroes of the 1908 revolution. Born in 1873 in the region of Resen, southwest of Manastir, he had studied in the military *idadiye* of Manastir, where he came in contact with a sense of Ottoman patriotism. He had attended the military school of the capital, which he successfully completed. He started his military career in Ohrid, where he reached the rank of colonel. As a soldier, in 1879 he had taken part in the war against Greece. On the eve of the Young Turk Revolution, Colonel Ahmet Njaziu would go to the mountains and there he would start using the Albanian detachments, which he called the "*Çerçizi Tosk Committee*", with which he managed to separate the Albanian detachments from any affiliate with Slavic (Slavic, Bulgarian, or Greek) factions and join them in the common cause a few days before the promulgation of the Constitution.

Bulgarian and Greek model to be carried to an open uprising, waged by the opposition to overthrow the absolute regime of the Sultan and restore the constitution and parliamentarism.

This was another important turning point as those who swore they would liberate Albania by way of war from the Ottoman Empire, now swore they would use the war only to overthrow the despotism of Sultan Hamid's regime and restore the constitutional order overturned by him thirty-two years before.

The Manastir-based clandestine Committee "*For the freedom of Albania*", accepting the offer of the "*Union and Progress*" Committee to cooperate, in a way returned to the genuine principles of the Albanian National Movement and its legitimate demands expressed since the "*Albanian League of Prizren*" for an Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

By this action, the Albanians, who risked marginalization in the rivalry of the interests of the Balkan countries and were being instrumentalized by the Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek interests from the "Ilinden" Uprising of 1903 and what it produced, were back on the historic tracks as important actors.

THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION AND THE ROLE OF ALBANIANS

In the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908, Albanians played a major, if not decisive, role in its success. They took part in the revolution as Ottomans and as Albanians. This dualism is of particular importance, as it explains the success but also the subsequent failure of the Revolution. It explains the initial agreements and disagreements between them leading to the conflict between Albanians and Young Turks, causing consequently a Balkan crisis and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The process of national awakening of Albanians towards a social and political consciousness played a decisive role in these events, being in line with the developments emerging after the Tanzimat reforms, as a key turn towards national movements as an encouragement for the peoples of the Balkans.

Faced with such crucial circumstances, the Albanians had to decide: remaining within the *Ottoman-millet* with an Islamic identity, which would leave them forever in the East with complete assimilation awaiting them? Or being separated from it? The second path necessarily required national determination on ethnic, cultural and civilizational identity.

It was this first challenge of historical significance that Albanians had been seriously facing for more than four centuries as part of the Ottoman Empire. Its importance was even greater, as it went through an internal confrontation, as most of them had already embraced Islam and thus were included in the framework of its political concept (by being treated as an Ottoman-millet) and in the civilized one, although they were not fully identified with any of them.

As seen and explained above, Albanians will be clarified with Islam in terms of identity and with the help of Islam itself, which in imperial circumstances did not deny cultural and ethnic identities, but could be decisive in the circumstances of Tanzimat reforms with Ottomanism turning into an awareness of state patriotism rising on the doctrine of Turkish nationalism.

Albanians will be able to somehow cope with the clarification of Islamism as a consciousness aligning faith with homeland thanks to the political philosophy of Sami Frashëri accepted by the Awakening that love for the homeland, in this case Albania, does not contradict the loyalty to *vatan* (Ottoman Empire) and that in the likelihood of accepting Albanian internal autonomy, a common language had to be found as this could not happen with Ottomanism, as an awareness of state patriotism, where centralism arose in the cult and excluded the centuries-old forms of local government that Albanians enjoyed all the while they had preserved their ethnic identity, which had convinced them that the imperial umbrella protected and strengthened them

at the same time, which in return would they pledged loyalty for as long as it was in their best interest.

This is especially true for the Vilayet of Kosova, where the defense of the homeland from partition, beginning with the “Albanian League of Prizren” of 1878, went through a degree of declaration of allegiance to the Ottoman Empire and even Sharia as its code, in so that this, with the demand for the unification of the Albanian vilayets into one, would turn into a political consciousness, such as that of the National Awakening, with the determination that this goal could be realized within the Ottoman Empire, so as not to threaten the ethnic Albanian whole from partitioning by its neighbors, nor the spiritual pluralism created in imperial circumstances.

Albanians declaring loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, from the emergence of the Eastern Crisis, and especially after the Berlin Congress, as their ethnic were falling prey to their neighbors (Serbs, Montenegrins, Greeks and later Bulgarians), will not be a *Carte Blanche*. Because, Albanians, willingly or not, first and foremost conditioned their loyalty to the Empire and the Sultan with the protection of the Albanian ethnicity from the partition that was already taking place. Even as Sultan Hamid, at the beginning of his thirty-two-year despotic rule, with his well-known position to turn the Albanians into a stronghold of the survival of the Ottoman Empire in Europe calling them “*the flower of Islam and Caliphate*”, while declaring himself as the “*Father of the Albanians*”, conditionality, i.e. the protection of Albanian lands from partition or autonomy, remained the only measure of loyalty to the Empire and the Sultan.

The reasoning that the autonomy of the Albanians in a common vilayet “*destroyed internal unity*” and “*opened the way for divisions, as its enemies, the neighbors of the Albanians, hoped for*”,¹²⁷¹ was neither convincing nor acceptable against the concessions made to their neighbors to the detriment of their lands as well as threats coming from there.

On the eve of the crisis in Macedonia, and especially after the Munsterg Agreement of 1903, when the Ottoman Empire practically lost control of the European parts, while developments led to further partitioning of Albanian lands, trust in the Sultan and the possibility for the Empire to protect them had begun wavering even among his greatest fanatics, who began seeking support for the opposition movement of the Young Turks, even though they demanded the removal of the Sultan’s despotism and the return of the constitution, which they also saw as dangerous, because parliamentarism restored the secular state, which accordingly to them, was destroying the foundations of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the statement of the Young Turks at the Paris Congress on the preservation of the Sultanate and the Caliphate together with the protection of the Ottoman Empire from the destructive threats coming from abroad, will be an important and perhaps decisive factor that the fanatical part of Albanians, mostly from the ranks of the Sultan’s loyal feudal lords, privileged by the Eastern Crisis onwards, not only failed to appease them, but also turned them towards the opposition movement of the Young Turks and their path. Since they had already declared war on the interventions by the Great Powers, the concessions made to the Christians to the detriment of the Muslims and the protection of the Ottoman Empire from the collapse of which responsibility lay with Sultan Hamid and his despotic government, which had to be brought down as it capitulated to the Europeans and especially to the demands of Russia, which was defending the Slavic-Orthodox countries of the Balkans.

This turn would certainly not be possible without an open determination of the Bektashi on the side of the Young Turk opposition and the great support that this sect, which included most of southern Albania (Toskëria), a part of Kosova and Central Albania shown, on one hand, to Albanianism, and on the other hand to the Revolution.

¹²⁷¹ See Abedin Pasha’s letter addressed to Albanians in 1880, at Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, pp. 83-85.

Although in the Vilayet of Kosova, the Sunni majority and the Shia minority since Sultan Mahmud II's famous decree against the Janissaries of 1826 seemed to be in a "state of war" and the Bektashi had found the right opportunity for revenge that could appear as a possible return to a Karbala-like war and the like, yet the Slav-Orthodox threat that had already begun with the Macedonian crisis showing all its destructive power against the Albanians, willingly or not, convinced the *Sunnis* that it was the Bektashi who were at the forefront of the issue of to be or not to be for the Albanians, taking the defensive banner precisely because they were on the side of Albanianism and Ottomanism. This position will rightly provide them with an opportunity for a "different Islam" to be treated,¹²⁷² not only among the Albanians, but in general among the other European peoples of the Ottoman Empire, which supposedly increased the likelihood of the Ottoman Empire to extend its life in the European part thanks to this definition.

The opening of this issue, however, recalls the role of the Bektashi in the development of Albanian nationalism, which was neither accidental nor outside the social, cultural and lastly political contexts, serving the various constructions around Ottoman Albania, a state with double ties, that could stand as a bridge between East and West not only politically but also spiritually.

To explain it properly, this view also turns to social processes and historical circumstances, highlighting Bektashism as an important factor related not only to the power of the Ottoman Empire and its top achievement, but also with the penetration and acceptance of Islam in European parts, especially among Albanians. As we know, the role of the Bektashi was very large both militarily – being supported by the order of the Janissaries as an imperial elite, which Albanians faced since the time of *devsirma* (blood tribute), and spiritually - as a sect of liberal and humanist nature within Islam, which was suitable to Albanians.

Actually, the rise of Albanians in the military and administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire closely linked to the Janissary order, as well as the embrace of Islam by a large part of them, had to do with Bektashism and its liberal nature, which reconciled Islam with Eastern mysticism, but in some respects also with the west. From the Eastern Crisis onwards, when Albanianism emerged as a defensive need and as an identity issue to become a political tool, while the Ottoman Empire, foreign reforms, especially in the field of judiciary and economy, will be imposed on them Islamism giving way to Ottomanism, it will be Bektashism allowing Albanians to give up Islamist devotion, providing the Ottoman opposition, attended by many Albanians, especially the intellectual part, the main impetus in the fight against despotism to restore constitutional parliamentarism.

The meeting points of Bektashism with Albanian nationalism and those of the Young Turks were the fruit of the very character of this sect, which in social, cultural and political terms, accepted the changes, thinking differently up to an interconnection of opposites and their reconciliation. While *Sunni* Islam had become synonymous with fanaticism and despotism.¹²⁷³ As the Bektashi were targeted by the Sultanate in support of the Janissaries' order and a savage campaign was launched against them, that which Sultan Mahmud II undertook in 1826, and the tekkes would be banned and destroyed,¹²⁷⁴ in fact, the Ottoman Empire was set to enter a new stage of despotic rule, preconditioned on the overthrow of what was considered "a different Islam" outside the fanatical dogma preached by Sunni Islam.

¹²⁷² For more see Dora d'Istria "Kombësia shqiptare sipas këngëve popullore" ("Albanian nationality according to folk songs"), published in "Revue des deux mondes", Cosenza, 1886.

¹²⁷³ More about the role of Bektashism in Imperial life, but also in Albanian nationalism see: Frashëri, Mehdi: "Historia e lashtë e Shqipërisë dhe e Shqiptarëve" ("The ancient history of Albania and Albanians"), Tiranë, 2012, pp. 44-49.

¹²⁷⁴ There is much speculation about the number of victims in the massacres that Sultan Mahmud II committed in the case of the oppression of the Janissaries and the Bektashis. They range from a few thousand to two hundred thousand. Some meritorious sources, relying on data coming from various documents, mention the figure of over 60 thousand Bektashis, Pashas, Fathers, Dervishes, and muhubs (supporters) of this order who were ruthlessly massacred, which is the closest. But, in addition to the victims, the Bektashi order continued to be persecuted in most parts of the Empire except Albania, partly Syria and Kurdistan, where they found refuge. In Albania, not only will they find shelter, but the number of their supporters will also increase. The tekkes will be protected and turned into centers of meditation, as well as the spread of the ideas of Albanianism.

However, following the massacres taking place in most of the Ottoman Empire, the Bektashi remained untouched in Albania and many of them, on the run from savage persecution, found refuge and support in this country, especially in southern Albania and in the main towns of Kosova (Tetova, Prizren, Gjakova). Therefore, it was no coincidence that the Bektashi network was one of the main supporters of Albanianism, coming to use from the first moments of the National Awakening by the Frashëri brothers (Abdyl, Naim, and Sami).

The whole issue started with Abdyl Frashëri, who, taking advantage of his family's affiliation with the Bektashi sect, decided to use the influence for the benefit of the activity he had undertaken in the face of the threat of the partition of territories by Greece placing it in support of an autonomous Albania. Thus, Abdyl Frashëri, in May 1878, organized a meeting with the leadership of Southern Albania in the tekke of Frashëri. As it is known, the first requests of the National Movement were issued there in an open form and submitted to the Sublime Porte for review.¹²⁷⁵

If Abdyl knew how to use the influence of the Bektashi fathers in the Albanian South, his brothers, Sami and above all Naim, used and later transformed the ideology of the *tarikât* itself for the needs of Albanianism and for its own good.¹²⁷⁶ First of all, in order to free themselves from the hostage of the treatment as “Ottoman-Millet”, the Albanians were given the way to apply for recognition as an independent nation in accordance with their ethnicity on European soil. In 1880, Sami pointed out the existence of Bektashi Muslims among Albanians, alongside the Sunni Muslims. He considered this as an argument to prove the cultural pluralism and that of trust in Albanians as an important civilizing feature.

The fact that Bektashism recognized cultural and national identity, the spread of this sect to a large proportion of Albanians provided further evidence of the recognition of their national identity even in circumstances that Islamism sought to deny in the name of the religious identity seen above everything else. In this regard, Naim will go even further as he incorporates the Bektashi doctrine of the martyrdom of Imam Husein and the honor bestowed on Abbas Ali on Mount Tomorr in his construction of national identity, with the divine spirit that was there eternally present, ever since man began to meditate on his connections with creation and the creator.¹²⁷⁷

With the development of the political events of the 1890s, Naim tried to transform Bektashism by introducing especially a nationalist dimension to it.¹²⁷⁸ This will render his literary work even more special and powerful, as a source of inspiration for the wider layers, which, in this way, could easily be influenced by national ideas. In his “*Fletor’e Bektashinjve*” (Bektashi Notebook),¹²⁷⁹ first published in 1896, he reformulated the doctrine of the *tariqat* by addressing not only individuals but also the Bektashi themselves and, in particular, their spiritual leaders.¹²⁸⁰

In the last part of the text, Naim’s message was:

"Let us strive day and night for the nation they call Father and pray for them, to work together with the leadership and the elders for the salvation of Albania and the Albanians, for the knowledge and civilization of the Nation and their Motherland, for the language and themselves and for all the virtues and prosperity, etc., etc. (...) Together with the elders and leaders, to create love and brotherhood, unity and friendship among all Albanians, not to be separated from each other, Christians and Muslims to be together, to put all their work to

¹²⁷⁵ HHStA, PA XIV/18 Liasse XII/2 “*Memoire sur le mouvement nacional albanias*”, Bruxelles, 1899; 8-9.

¹²⁷⁶ Clayer, Natthali: “*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009, p. 430.

¹²⁷⁷ Idem, p. 431.

¹²⁷⁸ Idem, p. 431.

¹²⁷⁹ This booklet was republished in 1908, in Sofia, in 1910, in Thessaloniki, in 1921 in Korça and in 1996 in Tirana. It was also translated several times: partly by Faik Konica in “*Albania*” (vol. A: 174-176, 193 and 212-213), by F. W Haulsuck (in English), later in 1920 by H. Burgeois (in French) and Norbert Jokl (in German).

¹²⁸⁰ Birge, (John Kingsley): “*The Bektaschi Order of Dervishes*”, London, 1965.

protect and well-being, for the Albanian not to be cursed today, forever praised all over the world."¹²⁸¹

Also, Naim introduced an Albanian nationalist component in the doctrine of the tariqat precisely by transforming the concepts of love, cognition and even enlightenment related to the *divine*. Brotherhood and mystical love could be turned into national brotherhood, beyond religious differences:

"Among them, but also with all people, the Bektashi are brothers and souls;"

"Like their own souls, they love other Muslims and Christians;"

"Even more they love their motherland and patriots;"

*"The true Bektashi, whatever their faith, have a brother and a devotee at their head, they never consider him a stranger."*¹²⁸²

On his journey, Naim managed to get the epic poem "*Qerbelaja*" (Karbala),¹²⁸³ inspired by "*Hadiqatu's-su'ada*" (Garden of the Happy) of the Persian poet Fuzuli, transformed into a nationalist poem, calling on the Bektashi Albanians in the last part of the text not only to remember Karbala, but also to see all Albanians belonging to the same family and that, although divided into different religious beliefs, be as one. The prayer that the author sends to God at the end is also related to the development of a nationalist feeling for the education of Albanians:

"The brave Albanian with a wing,

how he was, let him be,

to have all the wisdom,

and love for Albania,

dying for the Motherland,

*as Myhtar did for Husein."*¹²⁸⁴

The Frashëri brothers were not the only activists of Albanianism who used and transformed Bektashism for the good of Albanianism. However, they paved the way for one of the most up-and-coming and most useful thinkers for the Albanian cause in the spiritual, intellectual and political plan in general, rightly passing on the platform of the National Awakening. After them and following the frameworks laid out by them, many newspaper publishers, associated with the tariqat, did the same between 1896-97.

Faik Konica was one of those who wanted to align Bektashism with Albanian nationalism.¹²⁸⁵

In 1897, having his own magazine, Konica tried to build a certain image for the Bektashi, both for readers inside and outside. He took Bektashism as an *Islamic schism* that had evolved so much that it would be more appropriate to call it a "*set of pantheistic principles*" rather than a religion having a ceremonial cult".¹²⁸⁶

The Bektashi factor among Albanians as part of the religious identity associated with a "different Islam" and its important role in all stages of the national awakening process, will help Westerners as much as the creation of the image as a people with different religious identities, which not only did not hinder national identity, but also helped strengthening it both socially and politically. This will even be pointed out by some of the Westerners, who will do much to bring this truth to light in order to oppose the Slavic-Orthodox propaganda of full identification of Albanians with fanatical Islam and Ottoman despotism describing them as fanatics and nothing else.

Various scholars, diplomats and politicians will use the Albanians' ties to the Bektashi as well as their support for Albanianism, to see Albanians politically detached from the Ottoman

¹²⁸¹ Frashëri, Naim: "*Fletor' e Bektashinjet*", 1896, p. 14.

¹²⁸² Clayer, Nathalie: "*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 432.

¹²⁸³ "*Qerbelaja*" was published in 1898.

¹²⁸⁴ Frashëri, Naim: "*Vepra*", IV, Prishtinë, 1986, p. 289.

¹²⁸⁵ Clayer, Nathalie: "*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*", Tiranë, 2009, p. 436.

¹²⁸⁶ "*Albania*", Brussels, 1897, vol. A:88

Empire, or at least to be given a place within it corresponding to political autonomy and their acceptance as an independent nation, including the project of what would be called *Ottoman Albania*, which would one day pave the way for an independent Albanian state.

The Austrian-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, Ippen, who was one of the best connoisseurs of Albanians and their problems, suggested to Vienna a supportive attitude towards the Bektashi, because “*the Bektashi as liberals accept Christianity and are ready to have good relations with them*”.¹²⁸⁷

This way of viewing Bektashism as a “liberal and tolerant Islam”, as opposed to Sunni Islam, was also a way to make it “non-Turkish” and even European so that it could serve as linkage between civilizations wherever they seemed irreconcilable and in mutual warfare. This shift is discussed in Brailsford’s lectures,¹²⁸⁸ according to which the Albanians “were medieval Europeans”, left in a “*frozen*” state, which consequently meant that their Islam was not fanatical, like that of the Turks of Asia. He went on to say that most Albanians were “non-rigid Muslims”, like all Indo-European races that embraced Islam.¹²⁸⁹

Indeed, for Brailsdorf, Bektashism was a liberal and heretical form of Islam that suited Europeans, some of whom even felt comfortable with it, especially with the deep mystical aspects that enabled them to enter into the secrets of the soul. The image of an Islam matching Europeanity was sealed with the compatibility that it was thought to have with Christianity.¹²⁹⁰

Putting Bektashism on the side of Albanianism and militancy of a large part of the Bektashi clerics in the direct service of the national cause in the most critical moments, the same as was the case with many Albanian clerics of the Orthodox and Catholic rites, who were martyred on the way, justifies the meaning of the metaphor about “*Albanianism as the religion of Albanians*”, which the Rilindja activists (revivalists) raised on the national platform, rightly remaining a most powerful political and intellectual axiom to open the path to national independence and the return of Albanians to the bosom of Western civilization.

Aligning Bektashism with Albanianism and the support that the latter will be receiving from it, will create appropriate conditions for the Albanian National Movement on the eve of the Young Turk Revolution not only to interact with it, but also to become a promoter of that great change, removing from the political scene the absolutist rule of Sultan Hamid to restore the constitution and bring the so-called second parliamentarism, therefore, Albanians entered this historical development into a double quality: as Ottomans and as Albanians, we know this which maintained the formula of preserving the Ottoman Empire – a duality to be taken into account if considered, and its demolition - if it were to be excluded, as would actually happen.

Accepting this formula for Albanians was part of a wise political judgment, as it paved the way to joining an important process, and at the same time preserving the opportunity to use it for their own interests.

At their second Congress in Paris, the Young Turks, by adopting a declaration on full equality for all citizens of the Empire, with Ottomanism emerging as the new comprehensive framework of state patriotism, paved the way for to determination for Albanians to find a common language with Ottomanism. They even accepted it as a protective key that ended the partitioning of their lands gaining an opportunity to becoming a political entity equal to others Ottomanism as a state patriotism, as proclaimed by the Young Turks, joined by many Albanians on leading positions, although in the name of an “Ottoman nation”, melted the interests of others in this overlap. However, Albanians saw in the movement the means and not the goal, i.e. return of the constitutional order and parliamentarism as an opportunity to realize their aspirations

¹²⁸⁷ For more see: Ippen, Theodor: “*Beiträge zur inneren Geschichte Albaniens im XIX Jahrhundert*”, published at Ludwieg von Thalloczy, “*Illyrish-Albanische Forschungen*“, vol.I, München-leipzig, Von Dunker Humbolt, 1916, pp. 342, 385; Ippen, Theodor: “*Skutari und die Nordalbanische Künstenebene*“, Sarajevo, 1907.

¹²⁸⁸ See: Brailsford (H. N.) “*Macedonia. Its races and their future*”, London, Matheun & Co, 1906, pp. 235-247.

¹²⁸⁹ Idem, pp. 235-247.

¹²⁹⁰ Idem, pp. 235-247.

through legitimate political and institutional means. This was part of an awareness that will be expressed to the greatest intellectual strata of Albanians to remain as their orientation not only then and in those circumstances, but also later and almost permanently.

The interaction with the Young Turks and their power to set in motion a great change without a doubt represented the first most important political “contract” of the Albanians with the opposition in a crucial process for the future of the country, such as the return of constitutionalism and parliamentarism in the Ottoman Empire. The departure of the absolutist government on the one hand and the return of the constitutional order and parliamentarism on the other, gave this accord a special dimension, as the Albanians entered it as an important factor, able to make things happen, set them in motion in one or the other direction. After all, Albanians needed parliamentarism more than others, because that was the only way to being a factor on their true power in terms of ethnicity, which since the onset of the Macedonian crisis had begun to be manipulated by neighboring countries, interested in shrinking it as much as possible through religious identifications and other tricks.

During the period of the first parliamentarism (1876-1878), notably, the Albanians presented for the first time their demands for an Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and for the recognition of their nationality status. These demands from the “Albanian League of Prizren” onwards turned into their permanent axiom, which, although rejected by Sultan Hamid, remained irreversible on the social and political plain and as the only pretext affecting Albania to remain Albania even when threatened by annihilation.

Connecting to historical continuity depended on the overthrow of the absolutist government, which could be done in cooperation with the Young Turks and on the determination to protect the Ottoman Empire. These were two interrelated and interdependent issues. The latter was the main precondition of this concept, as it only enabled protection from the claims of the neighbors, which were increasingly vocal already unfolding as common goals in the form of mutual alliances signed between them.

In line with these developments, which had almost reached the boiling point, the Albanian National Movement should have a clear position on Macedonia and its crisis, a crisis devised by the Balkan states (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece) for their own needs, for as much as they had to have an attitude also towards the Great Powers and their role in it. Since it had already taken over its management and it was rather clear that the plans for the division of Macedonia in line with their interests were outlined under the rug, although there was talk that the intervention should serve for its preservation within the Ottoman Empire.

From this point of view, for the Albanians, the attitude towards Macedonia and its crisis was of special interest, because it was related to their very existence as a nation and treatment as a unique ethnicity, and above all related to the fate of their state, which outside Macedonia, would be unnatural and dysfunctional in numerous ways.

Precisely for being such an issue, Albanians had to separate their interest in it from that of their neighbors (Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks), who were interested in carrying out their plans for partition by spreading chaos in that part, while the Albanians had to prevent this. This meant that Albanians not only should not be included in the *model of the Balkan yoghurt* by gangs and comitas, and use of violence directed by Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, but they had to fight it, because only then would they be able to get rid of the Slav-Orthodox attitude claiming there was no Albanian issue at that area, but rather other interrelated issues according to a mess, which needed the therapy of international intervention and finally the fragmentation to solve it.

Here and on this issue, the Albanians were necessarily related to the international factor and its presence, which after the Munsterg Agreement of 1903 until 1908, with the imposition of reforms in Macedonia, had taken over many things of Ottoman state sovereignty in this part. Since, in principle, the Great Powers, regardless of how they behaved with the various Balkan actors and how they oriented and exploited them, still defended the *status quo*, and thus the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, Albanians were left to behave in accordance with this

position and even protect it, while at the same time making efforts so that the Great Powers, especially those with certain interests in the Albanians, get even more of this interest in line with their ultimate goals - those related to the resolution of the Albanian national question.

But, evidently, this was neither easy nor simple work, as in those very turbulent circumstances, the interests of the Albanians were conditioned on the one hand by the relations of the Ottoman Empire with the Great Powers and, on the other hand, by the Great Powers with the Balkan countries, neighbors of the Albanians (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece), with most of them sticking within rivalries, whether among the great powers (Austria-Hungary and Italy), or the Balkan states (Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece).

Albanians remaining amidst these clichés, which, however, could not last long, despite statements that they were all for the preservation of the *status quo*, will best be shown by the crisis in Macedonia, which, although with the intervention of the Great Powers had to present some “harmony”, through the reforms to be kept under international supervision, it will culminate and even fail exactly when the Great Powers, after many delays with the Sublime Porte on approving the package of financial reforms related to legal reforms, received the consent of Istanbul, almost imposed by the threat of a joint international intervention in the area.

The reasons why the reforms will be sacrificed when it was expected that they were more or less put on the way of implementation were in the agreement that Austria-Hungary concluded with the Sublime Porte for the construction of Yeni Pazar - Mitrovica railway, going through Prishtina and Shkup linking Thessaloniki with Vienna. It was soon accompanied by another agreement on concessions given to Germany for the Baghdad railway. On the occasion, Vienna and Berlin, on the basis of several talks with the Sublime Porte, offered it a secret military convention to jointly protect it from the aggression of the Balkan states and any other military intervention.¹²⁹¹

This was one of the most important projects of Austria-Hungary in the Albanian vilayets, turning the Albanian area into an economic and political interest of strategic dimensions. As such, it turned into a pretext for aggravation not only between the Great Powers, but also between the Balkan countries, very much aware of what a railway meant passing through the Albanian vilayets and Austria-Hungary connecting Central Europe with Southeast Europe.

In fact, this project and the ones that will be revealed during 1907-1908 clearly show the interests of the Great Powers in the Balkans as well as the rivalries between them and their outlines towards the Axis Powers on one side (Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy) and the Entente, on the other side (England and France), between which Russia will stand, with its behavior being determined by the benefits it could get from either side in their mutual race.

However, the Austrian railway project in the Albanian vilayets, representing an Austrian-German-Ottoman pact and being of Albanian interest, served for presentations of other Balkan railway projects with the Great Powers competing with each other in order for the ethnic Albanian space to lose the importance this line provided. Thus, Russia, after ending the war with Japan, came up with a project for the Adriatic Railway through Romania, connecting Russia with Serbia to the Adriatic. It received the green light from England and France, being also interested in preventing a further penetration of Austria-Hungary and Germany throughout the Balkans, and in the line continuing from there to the Middle East.

Of course, Austria-Hungary rejected any possibility of building such a railway and announced that in accordance with Article 23 of the Berlin Congress, Montenegro was allowed a railway that could go from Tivar to Shkodra or any other points in the direction of Albania but not to the north to Serbia.

After Britain invaded Egypt weakening its position in the Ottoman Empire, it renounced its rivalry of railways in the Balkans in favor of maintaining the *status quo* for fear that it could lead

¹²⁹¹ For more see: “*Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*” (Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes), Berlin, 1915-1927, no. 22; W.M. Carigren: “*Iswolsky und Aerenthal von bosnischen anexionskrise. Russische und Österreichisch-ungarische Balkanpolitik 1906-1908*”, Uppsala, 1995, p. 206.

to an even greater rapprochement between Vienna and Berlin with the Ottoman Empire. Thus, London returned to the reform package in Macedonia, trying to attract Russia as well.

Russia, in the circumstances looking for a balance of its interests with others, in addition to its interest in British plans to turn to Macedonia's reforms, will not give up its support for some of the Austro-Hungarian claims in the Balkans, such as the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, provided it resolved the issue of sea straits in the Bosphorus and Dardanelles for which it showed major interests.¹²⁹²

Indeed, Russia will join Britain's plans for a new reform package, presented shortly after the June 1908 meeting of the highest level between the two countries, in Reval, Russia. But the St. Petersburg maintained special ties with Vienna and acknowledged its further extent of influence in the western and southern parts of the Balkans, provided that the claims in the Bosphorus (known as the Straits issue) and those against Serbia and Montenegro were recognized, to which, a bit later, Italy would also agree, provided it was allowed to invade Tripoli.¹²⁹³

BEGINNING OF UPRISING AT RESNJE AND ITS END IN FERIZAJ BY RESTORING CONSTITUTION

The withdrawal of Austria-Hungary from the reforms, which excluded the Shkodra Vilayet and most of the Kosova Vilayet, while most Albanian sanjaks within the reform zone were overseen by Vienna, rightly added to the concern of Albanians that the Anglo-Russian agreement was a new attempt to include all their space in the area of reforms, increasing the risk of partitioning of Albanian lands by its neighbors, while at the same time it engendered fear for an occupation of a part of the Albanian lands by Austria-Hungary, which was said to be possible in agreement with the Sublime Porte.

The Young Turks even considered the Sultan's agreement to give Vienna the Bosnian-Kosova railway to Thessaloniki as the beginning of the secession of European Turkey from the Ottoman Empire on scenarios of the Great Powers, which had already been drafted and were expected to be implemented. Part of these scenarios, according to the Young Turks, were on the one hand Sultan Hamid's agreements with the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans in order to strengthen their influence from the Balkans to the Middle East through the European and Baghdad railways. And, on the other hand, it was the British, who were linked to the response that London could give to the Austrian-German economic pact with the Ottoman Empire.

It was estimated that this would be done with the help of the Russians, who were always able to introduce their own satellites in the Balkans (Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians) at stake for their own interests. This meant that this time they would, in various ways, deepen the crisis in the region, creating opportunities for international intervention, which in this case would be done directly by the British, possibly resulting in Austrian-Hungarian and German intervention, which paved the way for the partition of Macedonia.

On top of these and the many speculations that rightly troubled Albanians, who were still under constant pressure from various emissaries trying to make them their own, the Young Turks did not find it difficult into drawing them in an uprising, even armed one, against Sultan Hamid. A very good reason for this was the European railway, which was specified to the Austrians, which the Young Turks began to use to accuse the Sultan of having sold the interests of the homeland to the Austrians and Germans, although realistically speaking, the European railway for Albanians was in their economic and political interest that could strengthen their position within the Balkan rivalries by turning them into a strategic interest of Austria-Hungary, which

¹²⁹² Popović, Vasilj: *"Istočno pitanje"*, Beograd, 1946, p. 198.

¹²⁹³ Galkin, I. S: *"Diplomatija evropejskih drzava v svajazi s osvoboditelnim dvizeniem narodov Evropejskoj Turcii 1905-1912"*, Moskva, 1960, p. 220; Pllana, Emin: *"Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi"*, Prishtinë, 1978, p. 228.

would make it much easier for them to defend themselves from the predatory tendencies of neighboring countries.

Evidently, the Young Turks will play the card of intimidating Albanians through railways that “*could turn them prey to Austrian-German invasions*”. This served them to use this as a good reason to approach the organization of the overthrow of Sultan Hamid even through armed uprisings, primarily with those that erupted in Albanian areas, from where then they would spread to other parts.

In this action, the Young Turks took full advantage of the anti-European “capital” and in particular the anti-Austria-German one, which has long been planted in the vilayets of Kosova and Shkodra by Islamist fanatics and some Albanian feudal lords, supported a lot by Serbian propaganda as well as money, which had already flowed through the many agents scattered throughout Kosovo, into the pockets of a section of the country’s leadership and some Albanian feudal lords loyal to Sultan Hamid. Since some Young Turks committees had already contacted some of the Albanian committees “*For the Freedom of Albania*”, led by the Manastir Committee, it was expected that Albanians would join the dance.

Circumstances for a joint action were created in the first days of July 1908, as two young officers gave almost at the same time the sign of the beginning of the uprising. Ahmet Njazi Bey (1873-1913), a major captain (*colagasi*) of Albanian origin, attacked the military depot in Resen. Together with two hundred others, including the mayor of the city, he fled to the mountainous areas and from there he issued a proclamation calling for the restoration of the 1876 constitution. Almost at the same time, Major Ismail Enver Bey, a member of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee left to the mountains near Resen.¹²⁹⁴

Both officers gave the signal for the uprising, as expected, playing primarily on the card of foreign fear. Other officers followed suit and climbed the hills and mountains, forming their own detachments. Njazi found it easier to gather Albanians around him, because he, as an Albanian, already had an agreement with Bajo Topulli, whom he describes in his memoirs as “the head of the “*Tosk Committee of Albanians*””.¹²⁹⁵

Colonel Najzi’s agreement with Bajo Topulli and in general with the Albanian factions involved in the uprising, most of which were related to the Bulgarian ones, will be reached long before thanks to an intervention by Baba Hysen, Head of Melmepan’s Bektashi tekke, in the province of Korça, after Topulli saw that the clandestine (illegal) way of war by means of the gangs did not help the Albanian cause as originally thought but turned it instead into a prey for its main opponents Serbs and Bulgarians, who needed more than ever the involvement of Albanians in revolutionary gangs. In line with the well-known attitude of the Bektashi to help the Young Turks but to do so within the framework of their union to overthrow the absolute rule of Sultan Hamid, Baba Hysen helped find a common language between the Albanian committees and the Young Turks, with a large part of them standing apart from the influence of the Bulgarian and Greek gangs and the well-known concept of the Slavo-Orthodox countries of using revolutionary violence in causing chaos, which although under the slogan of “liberation war” and “freedom”, did not go beyond infiltration in the Balkan chaos, as demanded by the neighbors of the Albanians, interested in partitioning of their territories.

The rebellion of Colonel Njazi and Major Ismail Enver Bey and the beginning of their uprising in the Resen district found suitable ground for the spread of the events taking place in the Vilayet of Kosova from mid-June, when a large part of the population there will join an uprising, called by the country’s leadership and influential feudal lords, after the news of the construction of the Yeni Pazar-Mitrovica railway spread, soon followed by rumors that the Austro-Hungarian army, allegedly after an agreement with Russia, was prepared to invade Kosovo.

¹²⁹⁴ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 228.

¹²⁹⁵ See memories of Ahmet Njazi: “*Balkanlarda bir gerilaci*”, Istanbul, 1975, and Priifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo – jeta dhe vepra 1865-1945*”, Prishtinë, 1996.

In fact, the small-scale uprisings against the construction of the railway that would connect Bosnia with Kosovo and Thessaloniki began in mid-April in Mitrovica, in the feudal parts of Isa Boletini, to expand slightly to other parts, including other centers of the vilayet. The focus was on Ferizaj, as the news spread that the Sublime Porte intended to sell to the Austrians the lands around Ferizaj for the construction of military bases. The rumor was fueled by the appearance of a unit of German school cadets from Thessaloniki, who in those days had come for a holiday in that part. That sufficed for the agents of the Young Turks and the Serbs who abounded there doing the same work, and many of the Albanians simultaneously ignited by local feudal lords, the Islamic clergy and Serbian propaganda, took up arms and joined the insurgent groups, supposedly “to prevent the German occupation of Kosovo”.

Aware of the serious situation in which it found herself, the Sublime Porte decided to take measures so that the movement of Albanians would not spread and, in particular, would not fall prey to the Young Turks, who were waiting for such an opportunity to act. Thus, Sultan Hamid ordered his trusted general, Shemsi Pasha, to go to Resen to finish work with Njazi, Enver, and other rebel officers, and then proceed to Kosovo. On July 7, on his way to Resen with two battalions of regular troops, Shemsi Pasha stopped in the town of Manastir to send a telegram to the Palace. He recommended that the Sultan mobilize those Albanian leaders who had been privileged for many years to oppose officers who had already revolted against the government. As he left the telegraph office and headed for the carriage, a young officer shot Shemsi in front of his escort, made up of Albanian bodyguards, leaving him dead on the spot. His loss was a strong blow to the Hamidian regime.¹²⁹⁶

The assassination of Shemsi Pasha as well as a fueling propaganda brought a great movement of various insurgent forces to Ferizaj, which from 5 to 23 July had become a major ground of mainly refusing parades against what was said to be “German intervention”. At this point the propaganda of the Albanians from the ranks of fanatical Muslims joined that of the Young Turks and the Serbs, although extremely contradictory and inconsistent with each other in terms of goals and objectives. But in those circumstances, causing a noise was important, no matter who would benefit and who burned their fingers.

Thus, the fanatical Albanians defended Sultan Hamid, the Serbs demanded that the Austro-Hungarian and German influence be fought and that they join anyone who, in those circumstances, revolted against Vienna, while the Young Turks aimed to overthrow Sultan Hamid prevent the incursion of Austria-Hungary, but at the same time its opponents were Serbia and its plans for the partition of Albanian territories, focusing on the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Manastir.

To make the situation even more absurd, the appearance of various actors with diametrically opposed interests, from what was said above, will not only fail to prevent a large size demonstration in Ferizaj, among the largest that had been seen until then in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, but would rather help the Young Turk Revolution to achieve its goals, as would happen on July 24, when Sultan Hamid would promulgated a decree to restore the constitution of 1876. This highlighted and confirmed the truth that it was not the power of the mass that determined the direction of change, but the ability to use it for certain purposes.

In Ferizaj, the insurgent mass was subjected to pressure with various demands. On the one hand, those of General Mahmut Shefqet Pasha, Governor and Commander of Kosovo, who demanded that it be turned into support for the government “against foreign interference”. For this he sought the support of Albanian feudal lords and the country’s leadership, who had long been enjoying the privileges of the Sultan, such as Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri, and Sulejman Aga Batusha from Gjakova, Qerim Mahmut Begolli from Peja, Jahja Bey and Rasim Aga from Prizren and others, who were called to show support to the Sultan “*so that the homeland would be defended from the plundering neighbors*”. And, on the other hand, there were demands of

¹²⁹⁶ Gawrych, George: “ *Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 230.

submission by Mirliva Galib Bey, Commander of the Skopje gendarmerie regiment, who as a member of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee, took over the high post, seeking support for the Revolution. He relied on fears that spread among the people about a foreign intervention and offered a solution to restore the constitution as the constitutional government, unlike the Sultan involved in all kinds of agreements with the Great Powers, would thwart Austrian and others for an interference in the internal affairs of the Empire.¹²⁹⁷

The double stances of the representatives of the Ottoman state (one for the Sultan and the other for the Young Turk Revolution) as well as their activity had an impact on the Albanians, who were already divided into opposite camps: that of the aristocracy - many of whom already began to take the side of the Young Turks, and that of the local leaders and feudal lords - who still defended the Sultan and the Caliphate, though seeking to emphasize this support in accordance with the circumstances and climate created. Some even demanded that Ferizaj’s rally, in addition to its readiness to defend the homeland from “Austrian occupation”, expressed confidence on Sultan Hamid, as a “reconciling formula” for all, regardless of the final decisions, which were to happen.

Nexhip Draga, leading the Young Turks branch in Shkup, supported the establishment of a constitutional government, though not bothered by keeping the Sultan’s place as a monarch. For his part, Isa Boletini, one of Sultan Hamid’s deputy police officers in Kosovo, equated the constitutional government with infidelity to the Sultan remaining loyal to that position even later.

However, from the first meeting held on July 15 to the last on July 22, the Albanian leaders of the Prishtina Sanjak, the Peja Sanjak, Prizren and the northern provinces of Kosovo - among whom Isa Boletini and Ferhat Bey Draga from Mitrovica, Bajram Curri and Sulejman Aga Batusha from Gjakova, Qerim Mahmut Begolli from Peja, Jahja Beu and Rasim Aga from Prizren, Mustafa Lita and Ramadan Zaskoku from Luma, Fuat Pasha and Zenel Aga Alushi from Prishtina, Zejnullah Bey and Abdyl Kadri Efendiu from Vushtrri, Murat Aga from Tetova, Jakup Bey and Idriz Seferi from Gjilan, and Islam Pira and Hasan Prishtina - made efforts to hold together. If they did not, then they would reconcile the constitution with the Sultan, and this would be done in the name of defending the homeland, as a matter of course.

In this regard, Hasan Prishtina appeared very active, trying to somehow reconcile the Albanian opposite poles. So in the first and second assemblies the Albanian leaders and feudal lords, who were trying to keep on to the same flag, focused on general issues, that is, on those that had to do with foreign interventions, against the reforms that would bring the partition of Albanian lands, linking them to the measures to be taken to protect the country from possible invasion from abroad, namely Austro-Hungary,¹²⁹⁸ although objectively this did not even stand. Because, Sultan Hamid and generally the Sublime Porte, had very good relations with Vienna and Berlin, and that the granting of concessions for the European railway passing through Albanian territories, was accompanied by a secret military pact, with which these countries were obliged to protect the Ottoman Empire from any foreign interference, especially those coming from the Balkan countries.¹²⁹⁹

Although the Young Turks were well aware of the Sultan’s ties with Vienna and Berlin, they nevertheless wanted to take advantage of an anti-European mood that had long prevailed among Albanian feudal lords and Islamist fanatics as a means of preparing Kosovo’s secession from the Ottoman Empire to then be used as a exchange coin for the needs of Vienna with the neighbors of the Albanians.

Due to this propaganda, it happened that in the two extended meetings of the Albanian leaders with the local feudal lords, the request for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire was not mentioned anywhere, a request that, however, was made by the “Albanian

¹²⁹⁷ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 230.

¹²⁹⁸ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 376.

¹²⁹⁹ See: “*Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*” (Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, 1915-1927, vol. 25, 2. P. 870.

League of Prizren” of 1878 brought to life in 1880 by the Provisional Government led by Sulejman Vokshi, issued by the League, and kept in various as a platform for the Albanian National Movement. At Ferizaj assembly it will be overlooked, not because “vatan’s” interest in those circumstances required only protecting it from the threat of occupation, as it was said, but because Albanian autonomy was opposed by the Young Turks, just as it was rejected by Sultan Hamid, though this time there was a lack of reasoning that “*it threatened the unity of the Ottoman Empire*”, replaced by the slogan that “*all citizens of the Empire, like Ottomans, were equal, fraternal and free*” and that the guarantor of this was constitutional order and parliamentarism.

This and the intimidation campaign on an alleged threat of occupation of the country by Austria-Hungary, and the great activity of the Young Turks through direct pressure of the people leading the gendarmerie of Kosovo, such as Galip Bey, the Shkup Commander of the gendarmerie, with the main segments of the state, the army and police together with the aristocrats taking the side of the Revolution, will finally convinced Albanian feudal lords and the fanatical ulema to submit to the demands of the Young Turks for restoring the constitution, provided that they were preceded by loyalty to the Sultan, caliphate, and Islamic law.

This wording would not deter the Young Turks either, as they knew that the return of the constitution and parliamentarism expropriated Sultan Hamid from absolute power paving the way for the Young Turks to come to power, which meant bringing down old structures protected by religious fanaticism. Thus, on July 20, a telegram was sent to the Sultan from the Ferizaj rally, demanding an immediate restoration of the 1876 constitution and the convening of a parliament, establishing a constitutional and parliamentary monarchist regime in the Ottoman Empire.

Two days later, another telegram was sent to the Sultan’s Palace by the Ferizaj Assembly, stating that if the constitution was not promulgated immediately:

*“People with guns would go down to Istanbul.”*¹³⁰⁰

The language of ultimatum was the language of the Young Turks already well prepared for this change, who managed to put the Ferizaj gathering in their full service, although the leaders of the Albanians in Ferizaj described the connection of the trust as a patriotic act committed in defense of the Sultan and the homeland, emphasizing they were motivated on the basis of “Islamist faith, religion and honor” (*din ve iman ve namus*).¹³⁰¹

They even presented the constitution as a document guaranteeing “*the holy rights of the Padishah and the general security of the homeland.*”¹³⁰²

With these words, representing excuses for a good part, 194 participants, among them the Mufti of Shkup, put the names under the full text of the bond of trust, becoming known as “*clergy, sheikh, aristocrats and tribal leaders of all of Kosovo*”.¹³⁰³

After being received in Istanbul, Ferizaj’s telegram undoubtedly shocked and disappointed Sultan Hamid. Ferizaj gave a heavy blow to his policy of turning Albanians into a pillar of support for his regime in the Balkans that he had pursued for thirty-two years with great fanaticism, even though he had an opportunity to be convinced by the Albanians themselves that the scourge of Islamism in which he saw them did not work even when he proclaimed them the “flower of Islam” and similar “praises” with which their national identity was denied in the name of the Ottoman-Millet.

From this point of view, the Albanian Assembly of Ferizaj turned out to be a more important factor in the restoration of the Constitution by Sultan Hamid, while Albanians proved that they were able to hold the key to major turns, no matter how much aware they were of this role.

¹³⁰⁰ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 377.

¹³⁰¹ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 232.

¹³⁰² Idem, p. 233.

¹³⁰³ Idem, p. 233.

However, restoring the 1876 Constitution seemed an inevitable move by Sultan Hamid. It is likely that even the great vizier, the Albanian Mehmed Ferit Pasha, had urged the Sultan to take such a step, as this saved the country from an internal bloodbath with consequences from the outside.

Thus, on July 23, feeling saddened by the course of events and in need of a scapegoat, the Sultan removed the vizier from office on the grounds that the great Albanian vizier had failed in his duty to keep his compatriots loyal to the Sultan. In his place, Mehmed Said Pasha was appointed Grand Vizier.

However, on July 24, Sultan Hamid restored the constitution, ending thirty-two years of absolutism.

History cannot pass over this time without assessing it as a two-faced government: modern on the outside and conservative on the inside, demanding that European modernity (in economics, law, and the military) be reconciled with Oriental social mentality and despotism, which was impossible.

The revolution had achieved its goal by uniting them all, but it remained to be seen how sincere that union was. And, above all, it remained to be seen how much and how it would fulfill the promises of those who had most influenced its victory, in the case of the Albanians?

And as in similar cases, the restoration of the constitution initially brought celebrations and euphoria. Because the constitutional government promised to guarantee the life, freedom and protection of property for all citizens regardless of religion or race, as it called them - Ottomans. The feeling of solidarity and joy was felt in the whole Empire. The Young Turks organized large demonstrations in almost all the cities of Kosovo and other parts of Rumelia.

The proclamation of the *Hurriyet (Freedom)* Constitution aroused great enthusiasm even among the Albanians, who kept repeating the slogans spread at that time "*freedom, equality, brotherhood and justice*". Only a few conservative representatives of the Muslim high clergy associated with the Sultan and the great privileges they had enjoyed, welcomed the proclamation of the constitution in a cool, timid manner.¹³⁰⁴

It was not only Albanians who celebrated. A large part of the Slav-Macedonian population of the Vilayet of Manastir, Thessaloniki and Janina, and even Kosovo Serbs, responded to the Young Turks' call for "*freedom and equality*".

The Young Turks tried to persuade all the representatives of the peoples, especially the Christians, to join in their demonstrations, suggesting that Ottomanism was a formula that reconciled and united all the citizens of the Ottoman Empire without distinction. The "*Unity and Progress*" committee, which was at the forefront of all manifestations, took steps and issued statements to convey the image of unity, progress and brotherhood.

"We are all equal, we are all proud to be Ottomans."

That is what Major Ismail Enver Bey said, the one who will joined the great captain, the Albanian Ahmet Njazi bey, in Resnje, when he started spreading the flame of the Young Turk revolution, which then, quickly, involved the entire Ottoman Empire receiving its right epilogue at the Ferizaj assembly.

The hero of the revolution urged religious minorities to join society, with a number of Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs openly joining the "*Unity and Progress*" Committee. In line with this stance, over a thousand committees, including Greeks, Macedonians, Slavs and Albanians, symbolically handed over to the government authorities any unnecessary weapons they had in their possession.

Jane Sandanski, leader of the "*Macedonian Revolutionary Committee*" (VMRO), after throwing down his weapons, immediately gained public popularity and was interviewed by the *Tanin* newspaper (Echo), a UPC body, where he stressed that victory of the revolution gave a fair

¹³⁰⁴ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 377.

answer to the issues raising the need for the emergence of guerrillas and guerrilla warfare, thus the well-known comita ended his revolutionary activity.¹³⁰⁵

Serbian and Greek committees will do the same. This did not mean, as the Young Turks and their propaganda said, that the victory of the Revolution, with slogans of equality, freedom and brotherhood between the various nations of the Ottoman Empire, and the return of the constitution and parliamentarism, “*had made the gang warfare unnecessary*”. But why was this asked of them by the true commanders: Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, whose threads they kept. As the events taking place a few days later showed (the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, the declaration of independence of Bulgaria and the declaration of Crete to join Greece), the Balkan countries, which sought chaos in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, at least temporarily, gave up further destabilization of European Turkey. They feared that their activities could lead to a radical turn in the Young Turks and their policy towards the Albanians, in retaliation for the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian actions, to turn to any new reorganization of the remaining parts of European Turkey (Albanian and Thessaloniki vilayets), in the form of any self-government or autonomy for Albanians in accordance with their ethnic and similar extent. Meanwhile, the removal of Thessaloniki vilayet from the Macedonian contexts so far in accordance with the declaration of the population there as Slav-Macedonian and Vlachs, could exclude Bulgaria from any “right” to interfere in the affairs of Macedonia, although this did not coincide at all with the concept of Ottomanism on which they had built their strategy of coming to power and had sworn loyalty to them, as would actually happen.

Serbia will be particularly intimidated by this option and the like that could follow. Seeing that the Bulgarians had achieved a historic goal and that the Greeks, with the unilateral unification of Crete, could remain satisfied, they feared an Albanian autonomy in various forms could be encouraged and supported by Austria-Hungary (in agreement with Russia, if free passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits were promised). As England might have demanded, backed by Russia and even at Italy’s consent to stop the influx of further Austro-Hungarian penetration, which did not preclude the annexation of Albania that could take place under various pretexts, especially the staging of an uprising, whereby Vienna would emerge as the main winner.

These and similar calculations, which were possible in the Balkan carousel, justify the position that the revolutionary movements in Macedonia together with the emergence of gangs and comitas, were from the beginning instrumentalized by the Balkan countries (Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece) to create a state of mess as a precondition for international intervention in order to remove, on the one hand, the character of the Albanian issue, imposing instead the unresolved issues of the Slavo-Macedonian minorities that would turn into the cause of its partition.

CONFORMITIES AND DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN ALBANIANS AND YOUNG TURKS

The restoration of the 1876 constitution rightly raised the hopes of Albanians that absolutism was giving way to a new spirit, creating space for good social and political change of a wide spectrum, with freedom, equality and fraternity replacing notorious discrimination on religious and national grounds.

Albanians wanted to see Ottomanism as a common state framework, complemented by the new form of patriotism that united the principles of equality and freedom. The hopes that this might be the case became even more apparent after the return of the political exiles and the persecuted, whom the Hamidian regime considered rebels and traitors and who had spend time

¹³⁰⁵ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 234.

abroad for years. Hopes were further heightened when thousands of prisoners, interned in various parts of the Empire, were not only released from prisons, but many were amnestied and even received special political treatment in the ranks of the Young Turk committees, which had they quickly attained the role of state-in-state at all levels of government into gaining the loyalty from the entire social strata, especially those who had been discriminated against or persecuted during the time of Sultan Hamid's absolutist rule.

This climate of change for the better was also felt among Albanians, being beneficial to them by gaining the lost freedoms and rights, those who from the time of the "Albanian League of Prizren" onwards, and especially after the spread of the National Awakening, had suffered severe consequences of persecution, imprisonment, internment, and torture. More than 5,000 Albanians from the Kosova Vilayet were released from prison and internment, as well as from Manastir and Janina. Many of them, after long exile, took back their offices and property taken away from them upon receiving sentences. Some were even compensated by the local committees of the Young Turks and intervened in the local government and party structures of the Young Turks.

Among the Albanians who returned to their homeland were Ismail Qemali, Ibrahim Temo, Devish Hima and others, who received it the victory of the revolution with the concern that came as a blow to the Ottoman Empire in those moments of enthusiasm from an external response, when on October 5 Bulgaria suddenly declared its independence from the Empire, while a day later Austria-Hungary announced the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, completely separating its ties with Istanbul, while Crete, which until then enjoyed autonomy, declared its union with Greece. On this occasion, none of the Great Powers took any action in aid of the Ottomans, thus underlining the diplomatic separation of the Ottoman Empire under the rule of the Young Turks.¹³⁰⁶

This was expected realizing that the Young Turk program, in addition to restoring the constitution and parliamentarism, anticipated avoiding interference and influence by the Great Powers in internal affairs, especially those related to the issue of Macedonia and its crisis, which, in turn, was assessed as fabricated and instrumentalized to weaken or completely remove imperial surveillance from that part in accordance with various interests, so that it could then be divided and partitioned.

As manifested during the campaign preceding the revolution (from April to June 1908), the Young Turks would focus on opening the gap with Austria-Hungary and Germany, countries with which Sultan Hamid had very good relations and, in addition to granting rail concessions (the European one through Sanjak, Kosova, and Thessaloniki-Vienna and that of Baghdad-Berlin), he had also entered into a secret military pact with them to protect himself from possible attacks by the Balkan countries.

The statement of the Albanian military soldier Ahmet Njazi Bey is well known, as he moved to the mountains with two hundred people with his call for the uprising emphasizing "*the threat of the occupation of the country by Austria-Hungary*". The colonel demanded that Vienna's interests be fought in this part and that all economic ties with it be severed.¹³⁰⁷

The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina on October 6 by Austria-Hungary and the severance of unilateral ties with the Ottoman Empire shattered all long-standing ties between the Danubian monarchy and the Bosphorus. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the leaders of the Young Turk movement also asked Albanians to take part in the campaign against Austria-Hungary. In addition to declaring hostility on the scale of a war, a boycott of Vienna's goods was required, the severance of all economic and trade ties, and the return of all students and intellectuals studying in the country.¹³⁰⁸

¹³⁰⁶ Idem, p. 236

¹³⁰⁷ See memories of Ahmet Njazi: "*Balkanlarda bir gerilaci*", Istanbul, 1975.

¹³⁰⁸ See: Prifti, Kristaq: "*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*", Prishtinë, 1996.

The Young Turks were convinced that in addition to annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vienna was also involved in the sudden declaration of Bulgaria's independence and Crete's unilateral declaration of union with Greece.

Bulgaria's independence was seen as part of a secret agreement with the country aimed at making it clear to the Young Turk government that the eventual continuation of the course against Vienna and its interests in this area would face the consequences of other pressures in the European part, where other similar measures were not excluded.

In the face of these developments, which demanded the further support of Albanians for the constitutional order and parliamentarism, to which they had provided a decisive impetus at the Ferizaj Assembly, Ismail Qemali, returning from a long exile, organized a petition in Vlora, the city of his birthplace, by which he promised support for the Ottoman Empire during this diplomatic crisis. Austrian Deputy Consul Taha in Manastir reported on the emergence of both patriotic Ottoman and Albanian national feelings.¹³⁰⁹

Austrian sources do not suggest that Ismail Qemali used rhetoric against Austria-Hungary, as required by the new government. This is considered a measured diplomatic stance of the Albanian leader towards Vienna, as he knew that it remained important in the coryphaeus of the Great Powers of decision making.¹³¹⁰

Despite the aggravations brought about by the Young Turk Revolution at the foreign level, in the vilayets of Kosova and Shkodra, the promulgation of the constitution was understood as a proclamation of freedom and the right to self-government of Albania. In the first days after the victory of the Revolution, in many cities, such as Shkup, Prizren, Gjakova, Peja, Ferizaj, Kaçanik and others, at the initiative of local committees, the employees of the old administrative apparatus, the mutasarifs, kaymakams, judges, gendarmerie and police commanders began to be sacked. In their place, councils were appointed, temporarily taking over local government. The start of a blood feud reconciliation campaign was also noted.¹³¹¹

The rapid disintegration of the old Ottoman administration in Albania and the impossibility of replacing it with a new one, in some parts began to take on the dimensions of chaos. This prompted the Young Turks in all the cities of the country to form local "*Union and Progress*" committees, which began to take over local government, appointing temporary heads of local administration and courts.

It is noteworthy that the committees of the Young Turks all the time took into account the interests of the Albanians and mostly cooperated closely with them in these areas. Thus, in many cities, the Young Turk committees displayed the aspirations of the Albanian population rather than those of the Young Turks, and this was natural given that local committees were largely led by Albanians and emerged as a bridge to the new government.

In the Vilayet of Kosova, due to the aggravated political situation, the Young Turks set up Ottoman committees of "*Union and Progress*", only in some centers such as Shkup and Ferizaj, while in most other cities they formed mixed commissions, attended by representatives of the country's leadership and the Young Turks' committees. However, they managed to turn the Shkup-based "*Unity and Progress*" Committee into an important government body for the entire vilayet.¹³¹²

The most important thing in this unequivocal change was that for the Albanians, as well as for others, the opportunities for free political organization, free press and national cultural emancipation were open, with Albanian schools being primary in this development. In the face of these circumstances, almost all Albanian political forces united around an opinion that the National Movement should be developed respecting this regime, that political and national

¹³⁰⁹ Gawrych, George: "*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*", Tiranë, 2007, p. 236.

¹³¹⁰ See report of Austro-Hungarian Council Kral from Manastir addressed to Aerenthal, 23 November 1908, no. 73, HHSStA, PA XIV/15, Albanien XI/6.

¹³¹¹ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 378.

¹³¹² Idem, p. 378.

activity should be legal within state institutions and in parliament, where all demands could be raised relating to equality and other rights belonging to Albanians.

This put an end to the organization of illegal activity and other forms of violence for political purposes, which had emerged since the staged crisis in Macedonia and beyond, when a part of the Albanians, following the example of Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek comitas, with the creation of armed gangs and groups, had accepted revolutionary violence and, knowingly or not, played their game.

However, free political organization, as well as the adoption of the rules of parliamentarism, necessitated clarity on the plain of demands to be raised to the level of national programs enjoying general social and intellectual acceptance or consent. So, the question was raised about the political positioning in the new circumstances of the parliamentary life and the constitutional situation, whereby clarification was needed whether to continue with the demand for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, as emerged from the “Albanian League of Prizren”, to be introduced in parliament as a democratic issue, or set it aside for time being in order to make use of the constitutional freedoms to legally develop the cultural-national movement, to open Albanian schools throughout the country, spreading through it all the means of learning in the Albanian language and for its further delivery, moving forward in raising the political consciousness of the people to strengthen the national unity of the Albanians?

The first demand, autonomy, certainly led to an inevitable aggravation of the Young Turks, who had already embraced the doctrine of Ottomanism, enshrined in the 1876 Constitution (Article 8) included in the program, which the “*Union and Progress*” Central Committee approved at its meeting held in Thessaloniki, in the first days of September 1908, where the Turkish language was also declared as the official language in the state administration and schools.¹³¹³

However, this did not exclude the right of Albanians to raise the issue of their future status as an entity and nation within the framework of parliamentarism. Even the Constitution, approved by the Young Turks, was not a taboo, as it could be supplemented or even amended accordingly and in a *parliamentary* manner, as already warned on all sides, for which there were conditions and possibilities.

The “*Kombi*” newspaper, a few days after the promulgation of the constitution, wrote that “*the desire and means of every Albanian should be self-government and the proclamation of a national constitution, an Albanian state. All our actions must be directed there.*”¹³¹⁴

Even the second demand, that of cultural and national emancipation for at least a period of 10-20 years through the opening of Albanian schools, was supported by the majority of the population, especially that of cities, demanding the creation of some preconditions for political claims of such a nature. In this regard, the newspaper “*Shkopi*” was clear in its call for the opening of Albanian schools, but also in demanding political rights: recognition of the Albanian nation by the Ottoman government and achieving *self-rule* for Albania.¹³¹⁵

This position was especially defended by Mit'hat Frashëri in the “*Liria*” newspaper (Thessaloniki 1908-1910). In the articles published in this newspaper after the revolution, it was stated that Albanians would meet their educational and cultural demands and “enjoy the fruits of today’s culture if they joined the community with the Turks” and “*cooperated with Jamiat (“Unity and Progress” Committee), as nothing could divide the Young Turks and Albanians.*”¹³¹⁶

Cooperation and closeness with the Turks, as preferred by Mit'hat Frashëri, providing Albanians with an opportunity for civilization, however, was not without difficulties. Because,

¹³¹³ Idem, p. 380.

¹³¹⁴ “*Kombi*”, 31 July 1908.

¹³¹⁵ “*Shkopi*”, 15 November 1908.

¹³¹⁶ “*Liria*”, Thessaloniki, 17 July, 18 August 1908.

evidently, soon the demands of the Albanians, be they of cultural and educational nature, contradicted the principles of Ottomanism and that of the “*Ottoman*” nation as proclaimed by the Young Turks precisely regarding national emancipation, was put in doubt even a rising excuse for separatist demands.

Despite these differences and doubts, the new situation began to be widely used to organize a political-cultural movement on an all-Albanian scale, which would further serve the rising national awareness and unification of the people. To this end, immediately after the Revolution, national clubs were set up in various Albanian towns and other parts of the Ottoman Empire where Albanians lived. With them began the establishment of Albanian schools, teaching of native tongue in foreign schools in Albania, and efforts were made to adopt a single alphabet for the Albanian language.¹³¹⁷

In the continuation of these activities, on July 31, 1908, the establishment of the Manastir club of “*Bashkimi*” (*Union*) took place with chairman Fehmi Zavalani, who had just come back from exile, vice president Gjergj Qiriazi and secretary Naum Naçi. This club was the largest and most important, because it played a special role in the formation of other clubs and in the deepening of the Albanian National Movement in the period of the Young Turk regime.

In the example of the club of Manastir and on the initiative of patriots, in the months of August-September 1908, the clubs of Korça, Vlora, Elbasan, Shkodra, Shkup (“*Albanian Educational Club*”), Kumanova, Tetova, Berat, Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Pogradec, Janina, and Filati were formed. This activity continued in the later period. More than 40 clubs were opened throughout Albania so far.¹³¹⁸

The clubs were broad democratic organizations, involving various segments of the population, mostly led by intellectuals and civil servants. They were run by almost identical statutes, demanding freedoms guaranteed by a constitutional regime for the Albanian nation, as well as right to learn their mother tongue. It was tasked to work for the Albanian national unification, for “*its enlightenment by spreading knowledge*”, for the spread of education in the Albanian language and for its delivery, for the establishment of a culture of the people by opening schools, printing houses and publishing newspapers and books.¹³¹⁹

It was, therefore, an Enlightenment spirit of further national awakening on a horizontal scale, unprecedented before, stuck with much enthusiasm and will for knowledge and culture, which had to serve the Albanians to achieve a level of emancipation that was necessary under the circumstances. Notably, club leaders were very careful by pledging “*not to interfere in political affairs*”, taking advantage of the appropriate social and political climate in the country after the return of the Constitution on educational and cultural issues, free press and emancipation, which after all, it was national as the clubs and associations had opened up a whole new social spirit that benefited everyone.

Evidently, in the first stage after the Revolution, the Young Turks did not hinder the activity of Albanian clubs, nor did they come out against them. In many centers, representatives of the Young Turk committees agreed with the Albanian cultural-educational movement calling it useful for strengthening Ottomanism. The establishment of the “*Bashkimi*” club in Elbasan was achieved after a major conflict between Albanians and Turkophile elements. The same happened in Vlora with the “*Labëria*” club. In Shkodra, Turkophiles and local fanatical leaders for a time dispersed the city’s Albanian club and arrested patriot Dervish Hima, who had just returned to Shkodra from exile for opposing the Young Turks’ propaganda declaring Albanians “*Ottoman*” and defending the idea of a free and independent Albania.¹³²⁰

The pressure on Albanian clubs and patriotic activists to “soften” Albanianism through Ottomanism did not go unnoticed. Gradually, some clubs withdrew from true activity, while

¹³¹⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 381.

¹³¹⁸ Idem, p. 381.

¹³¹⁹ Idem, p. 381.

¹³²⁰ Idem, p. 383.

some others became subject to the new rules of the Young Turks, as it happened with the Thessaloniki Club, which later became a target of criticism by many patriots. But a few of these clubs quickly began to adapt to the fact by setting up additional “special committees” affiliated with the legal clubs to deal with propaganda related to the organization of the country’s autonomy campaign. Establishment of special committees, which are sometimes appear as “secret”,¹³²¹ however, could not be compared to the clandestine activity of the gangs that had emerged on the occasion of the Macedonian crisis, embracing the slogan of “liberation war” against the Ottoman Empire, based on the well-known Slav-Orthodox model used to destabilize the vilayets of Kosovo, Manastir, and Thessaloniki for the interests of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. On the contrary, this time the special committees were under the supervision of the “Istanbul Committee” and they served the intensification of the struggle for Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, whereby in order to oppose the Young Turk centralist government it included open and announced protests, leading to large-scale rebellions and armed uprisings such as those of 1909-1912, which paved the way for developments leading to the declaration of independence of Albania.

Before this “special” activity appeared within the clubs, related to social and political issues, i.e. at the stage of their rapid spread, the clubs played an important role in the organization of the National Movement. Thus, on the clubs’ initiative, for the first time in the history of the country, newspapers in the Albanian language began to be published in Albania and several other centers of the Ottoman Empire.

In Korça the following newspapers began publishing in a row: “*Korça*” (1908-1910), edited by Sami Pojani; “*Lidhja Ortodokse*” (“*Orthodox Alliance*”) (1909-1910) and “*Koha*” (“*Time*”) (1911-1912) under the care of Mihal Grameno; in Manastir “*Bashkimi i Kombit*” (“*National Unity*”) (1909-1910) by Fehmi Zavalani and later “*Drita*” (1911-1912) by Mustafa Hilmi Leskoviku; in Shkup “*Shkupi*” (1911-1912), published by Jashar Erebara; in Janina “*Zgjimi i Shqipërisë*” (“*Albania’s Awakening*”) (1909-1910) by Abdyl Bakiu, replaced by Naum Naçi; in Elbasan “*Tomori*” (1910) by Lef Nosi and other outlets. Of the main Albanian press publications were also “*Liria*” (“*Freedom*”) in Thessaloniki (1908-1910) by Mit’hat Frashëri; “*Shqipëtar*” (“*The Albanian*”) in Istanbul (1909-1911) by Dërvish Hima, etc.¹³²²

Similar important organs of the Albanian press continued to be published outside Albania, such as “*Shqypeja e Shqypënis*” (“*Eagle of Albania*”) (1909-1911) in Sofia; “*Shkopi*” (“*Cane*”) (1907-1908) and “*Rrufeja*” (“*Thunder*”) (1909-1910) in Egypt under the direction of Josif Bagëri; “*Dielli*” (“*Sun*”) (1909-1910) in Boston; “*Liri e Shqipërisë*” (“*Freedom of Albania*”) (1911-1915) in Sofia, etc. During 1908-1912 both in Albania and abroad over 35 Albanian press outlets were published.¹³²³

In addition to the Albanian clubs and newspapers that opened rapidly in all parts of Albania, Istanbul, and the Diaspora, large impulses will be received by Albanian schools and national education, as a major issue allowing for national identity. Although the new constitution, regardless of religion, recognized the right to education of all citizens of the Ottoman Empire, declaring them “Ottoman” and Turkish as a compulsory official language in schools denied the right of non-Turkish peoples to have national schools. Under these conditions, the opening of Albanian schools and the spread of teaching in Albanian, as before, remained the task of the Albanian National Movement, in particular of Albanian clubs and patriotic societies.

The establishment and opening of Albanian schools was a difficult task, as it is on that section that the challenges of Albanian unification and national identity were being tested. Until 1908, schools in Albania had been organized according to religious lines: Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic. If the Albanian patriots wanted to unite the Albanians and develop their

¹³²¹ Idem, p. 383.

¹³²² Idem, p. 384.

¹³²³ Idem, p. 384.

national consciousness, then the new schools had to be non-religious.¹³²⁴ Most of them were, since the Albanian intellectuals and patriots such as Veqilharxhi, Jubani, Mitko, Kristoforidhi, the Frashëri brothers (Abdyl, Sami and Naim), Pashko Vasa, and others had already given the right answer to this question making it very clear that national education should remain outside the realm of religion.

On these principles, the first Albanian primary school was opened on August 2, 1908 in Elbasan. During September, Albanian schools were opened in Tirana, Berat, Gjirokastra, Korça. Albanian schools were also opened in Manastir, Nistova, Dibra, while in Prizren the previously opened Albanian school continued to function.

So this was a large move that began to get support from abroad as well. Thus, the Ambassador of Vienna in Istanbul, Pavlacini, on behalf of his government, officially submitted a request to the Sublime Porte to introduce the teaching of the Albanian language in all state schools in the Albanian territories.¹³²⁵

This, and especially the pressure that the Sublime Porte received from the leaders of the Albanian National Movement, senior activists of the “*Unity and Progress*” Committee, made the Ministry of Education, in October 1908, to issue a decree according to which the Albanian language was introduced as a subject in Turkish state schools, in those primary (*meyteps*) and semi-secondary (*ruzdiye*). At the end of October, the “*Bashkimi*” (Union) club of Janina decided to introduce the Albanian language in all Turkish schools and to establish an Albanian school in Janina for the preparation of Albanian language teachers for the entire vilayet.¹³²⁶

The Albanian language began to be introduced in Kosovo schools as well. Nexhip Draga, one of the leaders of the Shkup Club, opened several Albanian schools in several villages in Kosovo. Realizing the extension, requests and petitions were sent from Prishtina and other cities to the Sublime Porte, requesting the teaching of the Albanian language in state schools, especially high schools (*idadie*), which was accepted, although from Prishtina and some other parts of Kosovo certain pro-Turkish and fanatical Islamist forces issued demands and protests even against that, on the grounds that they led to the weakening of ties with the Islamic Empire and culture.

In addition to the introduction of the Albanian language in Turkish schools (primary and secondary), another great success of national education marked the opening of the Normal School (pedagogical) in Elbasan. It began work on December 1, 1909 as the first Albanian national high school. Its first teachers were well-known patriots and prominent people in the field of culture, such as Aleksandër Xhuvani (graduated in Greece in philology, distinguished in the field of literature), Sotir Peci (also graduated in Greece on mathematics and physics), director of the newspaper “*Kombi*” – “*The Nation*”), etc. Its first director was Luigj Gurakuqi. Pjetër Dodbiba, Simon Shuteriqi, Hasan Mejza, and Hafiz Ibrahim Daliu also taught at the Normal School.¹³²⁷

Since the first year of its establishment, the Normal School of Elbasan had 160 students from all over Albania. Some of them, about 50 were from Kosovo, Dukagjin Plain and Dibra, sent by Albanian clubs, such as that of Shkup, Dibra and others, under the special care of patriots such as Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri and Nexhip Draga.¹³²⁸

On the efforts of the Shkup Education Club, and especially of Hasan Prishtina and other patriots from Kosovo, in the autumn of 1909 Albanian schools were opened in the Vilayet of Kosova, Morava, Gjilan and Pozharan. During this time, Albanian schools were established in

¹³²⁴ Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, p. 334.

¹³²⁵ A Vienna Confidential Circular no. 77 of 7 October 1908, HHStA, PA XIV/15, Albanien XI/6.

¹³²⁶ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 389.

¹³²⁷ Idem, p. 418.

¹³²⁸ Idem, p. 418.

Prizren, Gjakova, Peja and Vushtrri. In January 1910, the Shkup club opened a private Albanian school in the city, while in February the Albanian school was opened in Mitrovica.¹³²⁹

The introduction of Albanian language teaching as a subject in primary and secondary schools in Albanian vilayets as well as the opening of Albanian national schools (*“Normalja”* of Elbasan, and the requests of Albanians to open schools in other parts and even those funded by the state), aroused opposition from Islamist fanatics in some parts of the vilayets of Kosova and Shkodra. The Young Turk clubs and the *ulema*, including also some of the Albanian feudal lords who supported Sultan Hamid’s despotic policy, sent petitions to Istanbul protesting against the introduction of the Albanian language in Turkish state schools and generally against the opening of Albanian schools, which they said were not an expression of the will of Muslims, but of foreign agencies. In some cities of Kosovo, as well as in Shkodra, such circles organized open protests and demonstrations against the Albanian school.

Agitating against Albanian schools and education was neither accidental nor expressive of the confusion of those who did not notice the new changes. On the contrary, the propaganda against the Albanian language and school had begun to be linked to other issues, in order to bring as many concerns as possible creating with it circumstances to prevent their spread with the reasoning that “they were rejected from within”, by those who felt Ottoman. On the other hand, the efforts of Albanian intellectuals and patriots, already concentrated in Istanbul, voiced their demands for national emancipation in an open display demanding to be met within the framework of the constitutional rights guaranteed to them, trying to be stripped as much as possible of the “legitimacy of the millet”.

This propaganda had already been aided by the Greek church, which openly threatened Albanian students of the Orthodox faith seeking to ban the Albanian language through abhorrence,¹³³⁰ all of which gave the impression that the decree introducing the teaching of the Albanian language could have been forwarded even by countermeasures and other behind-the-scenes plots from all sides, that Albanian education - which from the pressure of the Albanians and their demands related to the constitutional right to equality, would be allowed by the Ottoman Empire – “to be rejected” by the Albanians themselves and explained that they already “*had an Islamist cultural consciousness and an Ottoman political determination*”.

These will be the first divisions on this basis which in the vilayets of Kosova and Shkodra deepened on the occasion of the opening of discussions about the alphabet of the Albanian language, which suited the Young Turks to change their attitude towards the use of the Albanian language and its introduction in schools on the grounds that “*it helped create separatist consciousness*”.

Another difficulty for the spread of the Albanian school were the textbooks and the alphabet. Since it was not possible to publish texts in Albania, they began to come from abroad, especially Romania. In the first days after the promulgation of the constitution, at the end of July and the beginning of August 1908, the “*Bashkimi*” Society of Bucharest sent to Albania, through the club of Manastir, about 20 thousand alphabet books and other Albanian books. The society of Bucharest remained the main supplier of the Albanian school with Albanian books with this being one of the greatest contributions given by the society to the consolidation of the Albanian education in the circumstances. The texts mentioned, however, were not published in a unique alphabet, which was missing. Currently, textbooks and books generally were printed in the Istanbul and Shkodra alphabet.

The latter also had two variants: that of the literary society “*Bashkimi*” (“*Union*”) and that of “*Agimi*” (“*Dawn*”). Alphabets of the two literary societies were in use in the north, and that of Istanbul in the south. However, both alphabets had Latin letters in common, borrowed from

¹³²⁹ Idem, p. 418.

¹³³⁰ Report of K. Kral addressed to Aerenthal from Shkodra, on 20 January 1909, included in the documents of AUSTRIAN State Archive HHStA, PA XIV/15, Albanien XI/6.

other languages, but with the only difference that “*Agimi*” alphabet used one letter for one sound, as did the Istanbul alphabet. While that of “*Bashkimi*” united some of the consonants to mark a sound.

The unification of the alphabet, therefore, was not only a cultural issue, but for the circumstances in which the Albanians found themselves, it also appeared as a political issue, with clear connotations of coping with their divisions that hindered internal unity and friction between civilizations, which were actualized to test the affiliation of the Albanians and their role they played in the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Since the definition of Latin letters was already a matter for Albanians, it had set the preconditions for an internal national unification, which united the Gegs and Tosks, uniting the north and the south.

This determination also heralded another important victory of Western civilization for its return to its space lost five centuries ago, which seemed lost for a long time, a loss which Serbs, Greeks and Russians blamed Albanians for allegedly their privileges and benefits for siding with the Ottomans, being for centuries their right hand towards submission of Christian resistance against them.¹³³¹

Albanian patriots, both at home and abroad, on this particular and sensitive issue too, crucial for their being between East and West, appeared as highly responsible. This historic responsibility, however, will begin with the establishment of the “*Society for the Printing of Albanian Letters*” in Istanbul a year after the establishment of the Albanian League of Prizren.¹³³²

Its founding document points out the need to enlighten the minds through the mother tongue:

*“All educated nations became civilized by writing in their own language. Every nation that does not write its own language and has no books in its own language is in darkness and barbarity. And, Albanians who do not write their own language and do not have (currently) works in their own language are in the same situation ... Consequently, those who think and see this great calamity are also aware of the great need to write their language and read works in it.”*¹³³³

Similar evaluations about the concern for the Albanian language and the fear that without its writing there will be neither Albania nor Albanians, nor will the Albanian name be read on the world map, as Konstantin Kristoforidhi said a year earlier, on the occasion of the publication in Albanian of a translation of some parts of the “*Old and New Testament*”, assisted by the “*British Bible Society*”, which opened its branch in Elbasan taking care for spreading ecclesiastical liturgy in the Albanian language.¹³³⁴

The ideologue of the National Awakening, Sami Frashëri, lacked no courage of facing with the many difficulties. This is best seen in a letter he sent to De Rada in those days:

*“The Albanian language must be one and indivisible, just as Albania must be.”*¹³³⁵

This high historical responsibility was best expressed at the Alphabet Congress in Manastir, held on 14 and 22 October 1908.

Before reaching to that historic day, the efforts for the Albanian language, for the Albanian letters and in general for the necessity of reflecting the cultural identity of the Albanians as a

¹³³¹ For more on this see the Memorandum of the Serbian Orthodox Church of 1909, addressed to the French, German, British, Austro-Hungarian, and Italian governments about the so-called “endangerment of Christian civilization by the Albanian-Islamists and their attempts to overthrow European Christianity”, quoted according to the Acts of the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry in Bonn, document no. 13667, Türkei, box 136.

¹³³² “*Shoqëria e të Shtypurit Shkronjave Shqip*” (“*Albanian Letter Printing Society*”) was founded in Istanbul on September 30, 1879. It was headed by Sami Frashëri. Its members were also: Mehmed Ali Vrioni, Ibrahim Dino, Abdyl Frashëri, Pashko Vasa, Nikollë Banoti Shkodrani, Koto Hoxhi, Anastas Konstandin Frashëri, and Jani Vreto Postenani.

¹³³³ See “*Shoqëria e Stambollit*”, published in “*Dituria*” II, 1926.

¹³³⁴ For more on the activities of the “*British Bible Society*” and the efforts to introduce the Albanian language as a language of ecclesiastical liturgy, see the chapter: “*Albanians and Western civilization*”.

¹³³⁵ See parts of S. Frashëri’s korrespondence with De Rada at Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 117.

precondition that the national identity needs, was made in the forties of the nineteenth century with the proclamation of the Tanzimat reforms, whereby the Ottoman Empire, at least formally - but this was important - had recognized the rights of the Christian nations to receive education in their mother tongue in public schools.¹³³⁶

Since Albanians were denied the right to their schools because the Sublime Porte continued to identify nationality with religion, and this was decisive for political status, for the first time the need arose for Albanians to be granted the right to nationality with three beliefs, but on the way to this, then use all the opportunities for Christian Albanians to use the rights offered by the Tanzimat Reforms, to raise the issue of education in the Albanian language and the use of the Albanian language in religious liturgies. This was even more necessary, as the opening of religious education in Albania in foreign languages (Greek, Serbian and Aromanian) was gaining momentum and increasing the risk of them turning into instigators of further divisions among Albanians over religious affiliation. Thus, the need arose for the demands for the Albanian language and school to first come from Christian Albanians.¹³³⁷

The first and major efforts in this direction were made by Naum Veqilharxhi (Naum Panojot Bredhi), whose life and work will, in a way, symbolize the progress of the Albanian National Movement so that the impulses first come from abroad, from its parts detached early or during subsequent migrations. From Romania, where he will be politically emancipated, being part of the great uprising that broke out against the Turkish rule under the leadership of Tudor Vladimirescu and A. Ypsilanti, known for the circular addressing the Orthodox Albanians, pointing out the following:

*“The time has come for us to boldly change course, taking on from now on as the world's advanced nations...”*¹³³⁸

In this spirit, his efforts to compile a special Albanian alphabet are well known. He thought that the Latin, Greek or Arabic alphabets, which had been used until then for the writing of Albanian, without any special exceptions, not only were not able to fully provide all the sounds of Albanian, but none of them, for religious reasons, would be accepted by all Albanians together. Borrowing elements from previous alphabets, Naum created a new alphabet, with which he compiled several Albanian texts, among which of great importance was “*Evetari*” (1844), a small, polygraphed primer, representing the first alphabet book of the Albanian language. A year later, Naum published a second primer “*Fare i ri evetar shqip*”, a much more updated than the first and accompanied by an extensive preface. With this primer, Naum made serious efforts to elevate teaching on a scientific basis, trying to enrich the Albanian language with a series of words and terms of culture and science.¹³³⁹

In addition to the first efforts by Naum Veqilharxhi and his co-thinkers in special centers in Albania and other parts where the Albanian Diaspora lived (Romania, Bulgaria, Egypt and elsewhere), leading to increased efforts for the language and Albanian education, the Albanian National Movement, powerful impulses came from across the sea, the Arbëresh of Italy. Under the influence of romanticism and interest in European linguistics for the Albanian language in the first half of the 19th century, Arbëresh intellectuals began to study history, folklore and their national language, which they preserved from their former homeland.

At the time when the first ideas of comparative linguistics began to emerge and the genealogical connections of a language were discovered, the Arbëresh scholar Engjëll Marashi, in the early years of the 19th century, and Josif Krispi and Gjon Skiroi, in the 1930s, threw out the thesis of the origin of the Albanian people and its language from the Pelasgians and

¹³³⁶ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kthesa historike 3*”, Prishtinë, 2009, p. 142.

¹³³⁷ After the announcement of the Tanzimat decree, the number of Greek and Serbian schools increased in Albania. Greek-language schools were opened in Korça and Berat, but despite secular programs, the schools were under the supervision of Greek bishops and were permeated by an intolerant religious and national spirit.

¹³³⁸ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kthesa historike 3*”, Prishtinë, 2009, p. 144.

¹³³⁹ Idem, p. 144.

Pelasgian, a language thought to have been spoken by the ancient inhabitants of the Balkans and the Mediterranean.¹³⁴⁰

At the same time, the activity of Jeronim De Rada from Macchia of Calabria (1814-1903) appeared, with the author becoming one of the most prominent figures of Arbëresh literature and the Albanian patriotic movement in general. With his works “*Songs of Milosao*” (1836), epic poems “*Serafina Topia*” (1843), “*Skanderbeg the Innocent*”, which he translated and published in Italian as well, De Rada presented the glory of an ancient people, who were part of the old European civilization, which needed to return to its cradle.

Important efforts for the Albanian language and for the creation of an alphabet, as discussed earlier when the elucidation of Albanianism from Islamism will begin, was marked after the establishment of the “*Society for the Printing of Albanian Letters*” in Istanbul, in 1879, under the direction of Sami Frashëri, when a working group was set up for the Albanian letters, with which school texts and literary books were printed. With this alphabet, which will be called the Alphabet of Istanbul, the Albanian Primer, compiled by Sami Frashëri, will be printed. On this alphabet the first books in Bucharest were published by the “*Drita*” society, including the literary works of Naim Frashëri and other authors of the Awakening, representing the foundations of the Albanian National Awakening.

These and similar works published abroad, along with those that Albanians inherited from early translations of religious texts, such as Buzuku’s “*Meshari*” from 1555 and other Albanian Catholic relatives (Bici, Bardhi, Budi, Bogdani, and others), among which as most important were the translations coming from Theodor Kavalioti (1770) and the time of the Academy of Voskopoja, and those of Gjergj Durrësaku (1761) and Dhaskal Todri (1805), represented spiritual and cultural treasure on which the alphabet of the Albanian language could be based.

Thus, the alphabet of the Albanian language, being essential and timely, had a lineage.

THE ALPHABET CONGRESS OF MANASTIR AND CULTURAL ALBANIALISM

The Alphabet Congress in Manastir was organized by the Albanian club of that city and was attended by 32 delegates from Albanian clubs and societies, from cities and schools from Albania, and the colonies abroad, and 18 other delegates as participants without the right of vote. Some of the most prominent delegates were: Mid’hat Frashëri, President of Thessaloniki club and editor of “*Lirija*” newspaper, Patër Gjergj Fishta, representative of “*Bashkimi*” and Dom Ndre Mjeda, representative of “*Agimi*” of Shkodra, Sotir Peci, editor of “*Kombi*” newspaper in the United States of America, Shahin Kolonja and Gjergj D. Qiriazhi, Nikollë Kaçori, Hilë Mosi, Mati Logoreci, Thomas Avrami, Luigj Gurakuqi, Adem Shkaba. Activists of the national movement and Albanian clubs also took part in it, such as Bajram e Çerçiz Topulli, Mihal Grameno, Fehmi Zavalani, Dhimitër Mole, Nyzhet Vrioni, Rrok Berisha, Leonidha Naço, Dhimitraq Buda, Akil Etemi, Shefqet Frashëri, Refik Toptani, Grigor Cilika, Emin Bey Shkupi, Hafiz Ibrahim Efendiu (from Shkup), Ramiz Daci, Xhemal Beu (from Ohri), Fahri Frashëri (from Resnja), etc.

The Congress was chaired by Mid’had Frashëri, Chairman, with Vice Chairs Luigj Gurakuqi and Gjergj Qirazi, while two of the delegates helping for a smooth running of the Congress and in forging and deepening the atmosphere of brotherhood and reconciliation were Gjergj Fishta and Hoxha Afiz Ibrahim, representative of Shkup. The latter threw himself at Fishta, when he left the tribune and hugged him with tears in his eyes. Notably, this scene in the

¹³⁴⁰ Idem, p. 145.

presence of more than three hundred people, three-quarters of whom were Muslims, could only leave the deepest impression.¹³⁴¹

The overall progress of the work of the Congress and the decisions it took left a good impression. Thus, the Congress elected an alphabet committee, composed of eleven most cultured delegates, headed by Gjergj Fishta, who for three consecutive days worked on a common and useful position.

Of the three proposals, Congress focused on the “*Bashkimi*” and Istanbul versions. Finally, the commission decided that both alphabets - the one in Istanbul and the new Latin alphabet - would be the only ones to be used, and that all Albanian schools would be forced to teach students both.

The resolution on the issue of the Manastir alphabet was an important step towards the unification of education and the unification of Albanians. Although it was not an ideal solution, as it were to be a single alphabet, it was a wise solution. The Istanbul alphabet could not be discarded because it had a long tradition and was widespread. However, by eliminating all other alphabets, the decision at Manastir made communication between Albanians easier: a letter or a book published in the south could now be read in the north and vice versa. It would also help to make Albanians of the Muslim faith and Christians more aware of their common heritage.¹³⁴²

Although the issue of the unification of the alphabet took precedence in the proceedings of the Congress of Manastir, the Congress itself was not merely a linguistic meeting, but also a political manifestation.¹³⁴³ In addition to open rallies, closed-door meetings were held on current political issues, discussing Albanian relations with the Young Turk government and the fight for Albanian national rights, including issues related to the country’s cultural and economic development as well as relations with European countries.¹³⁴⁴

In the end, an 18-point national program was drafted, delivered to the deputy of Korça, Shahin Kolonja, to present to the parliament on behalf of the Albanians. This program is an important document of the Congress of Manastir, reflecting the aspirations of Albanians for the territorial-administrative autonomy of Albania,¹³⁴⁵ of what was already projected by the Albanians and some European countries from the ranks of the Great Powers as Ottoman Albania, representing an ethnic Albania and becoming an independent state the moment the Ottoman Empire would leave the European part.

Among the main points of the program were those related to the political demands “*for an official recognition of the Albanian nationality and the Albanian language*”, continuing with independent establishment of the Albanian school, to be achieved by turning all the Turkish state schools in Albania, including primary, civic and secondary schools, into national schools and establishing the Albanian mother tongue as the language of instruction in all state schools, while Turkish would be taught as a separate subject, starting from the fourth year of primary school. Closely related to this were the measures anticipated to be taken for the transformation of schools in Greek, functioning for Christian Albanians, to national schools, with Albanian as a language of instruction, removing them from the administration of the clergy and declaring them state schools.¹³⁴⁶

One of the most important demands in the field of education was the establishment of an Albanian university, which had been an early aspiration of the National Revival champions.

Awareness of the commonality and overcoming the divisions that the Albanian alphabet provided together with the Albanian school and education among Albanians and its turning into a new expressive factor of national identity in accordance with Western civilization, will be what it

¹³⁴¹ Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 337.

¹³⁴² Idem, p. 339.

¹³⁴³ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 394.

¹³⁴⁴ Idem, p. 394.

¹³⁴⁵ Idem, p. 394.

¹³⁴⁶ Idem, p. 395.

most disturbed the Young Turks and the fanatical Ottoman part, being rather clear they could not count on the nationally awakened Albanians for supposedly to be used to preserve the imperial presence in the European part and this in most part greatly affected the political resonance of the Young Turks. Thus, the spread of Islamist propaganda against the Albanian alphabet and language was part of the strategy of attracting Albanian Muslims to their side through mass intimidation similar to that of the accountant settling accounts without the innkeeper.

Attempts of this nature were also made upon rejecting the Latin alphabet relating it to the “sin” against the Qur'an and its alleged complete discrepancy if it were to be read in Latin letters and written from left to right and not according to the rules of the Prophet, by which crowds could easily be ignited!¹³⁴⁷

The “sin” against the Qur'an departing the “rules of the Prophet” will open the final stage of the Albanian war against spiritual alienation from the Ottoman Empire and the return of Western civilization, albeit with the political language of this final secession soon to follow, clothed ever since the establishment of the “Albanian League of Prizren” onwards in the garment of the demand for autonomy and equality, which presented nothing but a useful strategy towards achieving national independence, always taking into account the most appropriate circumstances and time for it and the consequences it would cause.

By the stance to have the Albanian language written in Arabic letters, which will soon become an official demand of the government to be followed by a fierce campaign involving the most fanatical part of society and the highest leader of the Islamist clergy, the Sublime Porte will further add to the commitment of Albanians for the Latin alphabet and protection of the Albanian language and school. Thus, for the first time among Albanians, the priority of the national feeling towards the religious one comes to the fore, which the Ottoman occupation, by imposing Islam, had thought to have resolved in favor of Islam long ago.

When talking about the Islamist clergy and the savage campaign taking place in Albania against the Albanian language and its Latin alphabet, no means will be spared by playing into the game “protecting” the Qur'an, forewarning a settling of accounts with the “Kaur” according to Jihad and its means notorious means. However, it should be noted that not all Albanian clerics accepted the language of the Istanbul ulema that not all Ottomans, from the ranks of Albanians, thought that the Albanian identity should be sacrificed for the Islamic one. On the contrary, there were Albanians who thought that Ottomanism should not conflict with the Albanian national feeling, that it should be oriented towards the preservation of the Ottoman state and its presence in the European part as a common interest, considering that only thus it could withstand the hegemonic appetites of its neighbors and pan-Slavic tendencies, which Russia nurtured and directed with its allies. Therefore, it was no coincidence that many of the representatives of the Muslim clergy in Albania, from the beginning of the opening of the language issue positioned themselves on the side of the Albanian alphabet with special letters, in harmony with their historical tradition of Albanian writing.

Although the Sublime Porte tried to hide the patriotic activity of a good part of the Muslim clergy from the ranks of the Albanians, there were many who sided with the decisions of the Congress of Manastir and the National Movement for Independence, some of them becoming its martyrs.

One of them, Hoxha Vildan Efendi, a member of the “Advisory Committee” of the Congress of Manastir from the ranks of the Albanian Club of Istanbul, will not only oppose the official Turkish position and ulema, but he will defend with all his might the decisions of the Manastir Congress. He will attack the despotic rule of Sultan Hamid emphasizing the importance of uniting Albanians, as only united could they defend themselves and the Empire too:

¹³⁴⁷ See article in newspaper “*Liria*”, 15 November 1908.

*“Albania is now happy, because it is united by the alphabet, which was a powerful tool for its well-being. Every nation has the right to choose the alphabet that suits its language. And the Albanians chose the Latin alphabet as such.”*¹³⁴⁸

Hoxha Vildan Efendia further said that even the Turks lacked letters to write their own language; they had adopted those of the Arabs. In this line he spoke in all the places that the Istanbul Commission visited. He stressed that it was wrong to think that the Qur’an allowed the writing of the Albanian language only in Arabic letters and reasoned that the letters were not of divine origin but a creation of man.

*“It could not be said that Arabic was the only language that God liked, as there were many religious books written in Turkish. Consequently, there was no impediment to using Latin letters for Albanian.”*¹³⁴⁹

The stance of Hoxha Vildan Effendiu was important, because he, Fezil Pasha and Colonel Riza, as delegates of the “Albanian Club” of Istanbul, had come late to the Congress and it was thought they could be with the mission of the Young Turk Committee, which could to have disruptive intentions.

However, evidently, the “Advisory Committee”, on authorization from the Albanian Club of Istanbul, would deal with patriotic zeal, especially with the spread of Albanian works, their reading and the creation of a general mood for the Albanian school and education, helping greatly in deepening the climate of embracing the Latin alphabet, which had many opponents even among Albanians, although many of them had fallen under the influence of fanatical ulema that the Young Turks continued in various ways to stimulate.

Even the Bektashi, although they would support the Young Turk Revolution from the outset siding with it, refused to join the Young Turk campaign against the Latin alphabet and be part of the propaganda organized by them in support of an Arabic alphabet. Representatives of the Bektashi in all parts of the country defended the views of the Manastir Congress and the right of Albanians to their own alphabet. Some of them even joined the group of militants defending the Latin alphabet not wavering into taking up arms for its cause.¹³⁵⁰

In addition to preaching religion in a language other than that of the imams, the Bektashi accepted the logic of reconciling opposites beyond East-West confrontation and allowing for a national identity not contradicting with faith. In the later stages, the Bektashi will also accept national movements and siding with the demands for national emancipation with many of the senior clerics taking part in the process.

As stated, in the intensive period of the National Movement, tekkes turned into schools, clubs and centers for the expression of the Albanian national identity. Therefore, it is no coincidence that even three of the most prominent and deserving revivalists of the national awakening, the Frashëri brothers: Abdyl, Sami and Naim, came from a long-standing family following the Bektashi order.

Naim’s poetic work was heavily influenced by the Sufi spirit and Bektashism. Naim’s verses from the poetic volume *“Summer Flowers”*, depicting a philosophy of pantheism, explaining the transcendence of the soul and its transfer from object to object, that is, of a permanent continuity,¹³⁵¹ even before being unpublished, found their way to the Albanian tekkes from the south to the north, being read and sung over and over again, becoming together with those from *“Bagëti dhe bujqësi”* (*“Herds and Pastures”*), became a source of inspiration for patriotism of the illiterate masses among the most powerful of the time.

Although the *“Union and Progress”* Central Committee had pledged not to interfere in the issue of selection of an Albanian alphabet, in fact it mobilized against the Albanian National

¹³⁴⁸ Skendi, Stavro: *“Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar”*, Tiranë, 2000, p. 340.

¹³⁴⁹ Report by Kral addressed to Aerenthal, Shkodër, 31 December 1908, no. 166, HHStA, PA XIV/15, Albanien XI/6.

¹³⁵⁰ More about the penetration of the Bektashis in Albania from the 15th century onwards see Schwartz, Stephen: *“Islami tjetër”*, Prishtinë, 2009.

¹³⁵¹ Naim Frashërit: *“Vepra I”*, Prishtinë, 1986, p. 26.

Movement and in particular against Albanian clubs and schools all the central and local state administration, including fanatical Muslim clerics and expeditions of Ottoman generals.¹³⁵²

In this activity, the Young Turks relied on the law on “*Gangs*”, and the law “*On Societies*”, which banned all national organizations, except Ottoman ones. These two laws were passed in the Ottoman parliament in the autumn of 1909, despite opposition from non-Turkish nationalities, where a large number of Albanian deputies were the most vocal warning about the consequences for the country’s stability.

But the Young Turks, relying on the decisions of parliament, as the “*voice of the people*”, initiated measures leading to those that openly opposed Albanians, which will be reaching a boiling point opening a great crisis, turning once again Albanians into decisive protagonists for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, in search of the conflict with the Albanians, in September 1909, by order of the Governor of Kosova, the Albanian school of Peja was closed, while in January that of Gjilan was closed. In February 1910, the Governor of Kosova ordered the closing down of all Albanian schools in the vilayet and the abolition of teaching of the Albanian language by state schools. Earlier that year, the education minister said that “*the Ottoman government will remain impartial in the affairs of the alphabet, but in public schools it will implement the Arabic alphabet.*”¹³⁵³

The Ottoman government, however, will not remain “impartial” in the affairs of the alphabet as it pledged. On the contrary, in addition to the well-known legal measures in removing the Albanian language from state schools, it will put into action other religious, state and political factors to act to prevent the Latin alphabet from being fully legitimized among the Albanians. In this regard, in addition to holding many rallies in some of the centers of the Vilayet of Kosova and that of Shkodra, where Muslim and fanatical clerics will demonstrate against the Albanian school and the Latin alphabet, it will also instrumentalize some of the Albanian deputies with pro-Turkish stances, including Mahmut Bedriu (from Peja), Haxhi Ali Elbasani, Fuat Pasha of Prishtina, Sait Efendi (Idrizi) of Shkup, Hasan Basriu of Dibra and Riza Effendi of Shkodra, who behalf of “expressing the feelings of the Albanian people”, in the Parliament asked the Prime Minister in January 1910, to order the use of the Arabic alphabet for writing Albanian and to ban Latin.¹³⁵⁴

This prompted patriotic MPs Ismail Qemali, Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Shahin Kolonja and others to send a letter of protest to the Prime Minister, urging them to respect the legitimate rights of Albanians in order to set them free to use the alphabet they wanted and that the government administration not intervene.¹³⁵⁵

The open efforts of the Young Turks against the Albanian language and the Muslim fanatical clergy in the Albanian vilayets against the Albanian language and education and Albanian letters, demanding that they be replaced by Arabic, led to the holding of the Second Congress in Manastir, where support was confirmed to the common alphabet approved at the First Congress two years before in Manastir.

Thus, the *Second Congress of Manastir* was convened on the initiative of the “Bashkimi” club of Manastir. The Congress was attended by 20 delegates, representing 34 clubs and societies from the vilayets of Shkodra, Kosova, Manastir, and Janina, as well as the Albanian clubs of Istanbul, Thessaloniki, and other centers.

Unlike previous national congresses, this assembly had a large number of delegates from the cities of the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir, from Peja, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Vushtrri, Shkup, Tetova, Dibra, Struga, Ohri, etc. Among the delegates were Dervish Hima, Fehmi Zavalani, Petro Nini Luarasi, Hysni Curri, Ferit Ypi, Bedri Pejani, Qamil Shkupi, Gjergj Qiriaz, Bejtullah Gjilani, Themistokli Germenji, Tefik Panariti, Hajdar Blloshmi,

¹³⁵² “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 419.

¹³⁵³ Idem, p. 420.

¹³⁵⁴ Idem, p. 420.

¹³⁵⁵ Idem, p. 420.

Abdyllah Efendiu (Struga), Qazim Iliaz Dibra, Rexhep Mitrovica, and Xhafer Kolonja. The President of the Congress was elected Bedri Pejani, and its secretaries Ferit Ypi and Petro Nini Luarasi.¹³⁵⁶

The main acts of the Second Congress of Manastir were the 10-point Program and a 4-point Memorandum, addressed to the Ottoman government.

These documents provided for important measures for the development of national education, for the protection of the Albanian alphabet with Latin letters, and for the publication of books and textbooks in Albanian. For this purpose, an educational-cultural commission was set up at the central club, which in the program was called the Academy, dealing with the publication of textbooks, literary works and an Albanian-Turkish dictionary and vice versa. A Normal board school in Shkup was to open, similar to that of Elbasan, in addition to publishing a new newspaper here in Albanian and Turkish, through which both the Albanian and European public would be informed about the events taking place in this vilayet.¹³⁵⁷

Realizing that after the Second Congress of Manastir, held between April 2 and 3, 1910, most Albanians were already strong in favor of the Latin alphabet, or the one special script version, totally rejecting the Arabic ones, made the Istanbul Government turn to repressive measures against the growing Albanian national awakening, even though they failed to halt its dynamism, except that it will be further encouraged spreading on a larger scale.¹³⁵⁸

By a unilateral decree, the government of Istanbul closed down Albanian societies and clubs, banning the press, newspapers in the Albanian language, closing Albanian schools, as well as publishing houses in Manastir and Thessaloniki by removing, at the same time, the Albanian language from the government schools curricula.

This vandal act, which led to irreconcilable irritations between Albanians and Young Turks even turning into a cause for their departure from power in a while, will be preceded by a harsh statement from the Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Haki Pasha, declaring in a Turkish parliament session, among other things, the following:

*"The government considers the desire to adopt Latin letters (by Albanians) as the first step to secession from Turkey ... The government must do its best and will do everything to stop the adoption of the Latin alphabet."*¹³⁵⁹

At the urging of the Turkish government, *Sheyh yl Islam*, the supreme Muslim authority, sent a circular to all muftis of Albania on April 5, 1910, stating:

*"We hasten to inform you that on March 22, 1326 (1910), through an official letter to the Ministry of Education, we have drawn its attention to it (the Ministry) not to accept the Latin alphabet for the Albanian language and to have in mind that its use at school is strictly prohibited and therefore we address this circular to all muftis of Albanian cities and provinces to act as ordered."*¹³⁶⁰

Of this nature, as a last-ditch effort, will be those of the Young Turks, who, in order to oppose the Albanian alphabet with Latin letters and ostensibly in front of others to show the loyalty of the Albanians to the Arabic letters, in April 1910, a club called "*Arnavud Mahfit mearifi*" (Albanian Educational District) was established in Istanbul, where Arabic letters were propagated. The club was headed by the cleric and senator Haxhi Ali Elbasani, also a member of parliament, Mahmut Bedriu, a member of parliament for Peja and others. In addition, an Arabic-language newspaper in Albanian was published for the first and last time in Istanbul.¹³⁶¹

¹³⁵⁶ Idem.

¹³⁵⁷ Idem.

¹³⁵⁸ Acts of Archive of Austria HHStA, PA XIV/24, Albanien XIV.

¹³⁵⁹ Idem.

¹³⁶⁰ Idem.

¹³⁶¹ Idem.

This activity, evidently, will not be able to extend to the Vilayet of Kosova, as warned. It was opposed by the “*Albanian Intellectual Youth Society*”, founded by Albanian students at Istanbul University, which openly defended the Latin script, causing the Young Turks and Islamist fanatics to lose the battle with the Albanians in the capital of the Empire, where they had always thought they had the strongest supporters because the Albanians for centuries had become an important part of the state and military elite, ruling from atop over the Empire and helping establish and strengthen it.¹³⁶²

CHAPTER EIGHT SECOND PARLIAMENTARISM (1908-1912) AND ALBANIANS

DYNAMIC ALBANIANISM AND CONFLICTS WITH NATIONALIST OTTOMAN CENTRALISM

Albanians played an important role in the July revolution. In Ferizaj, tribal leaders, feudal lords and the town’s upper class took the initiative to start an uprising demanding the restoration of the constitution, but also acting on Sultan Hamid and in defense of *vatan*.¹³⁶³

Unlike the “Albanian League of Prizren” of 1878, focusing on the issue of preserving Albanian lands by issuing a demand for their unification into a single vilayet to be governed by them within the Ottoman Empire, this time they took part in a larger Ottoman effort to replace the despotic regime with a constitutional government. Thus, the July Revolution found the Albanians more nationally aware and more politically motivated. The second constitutional period created a new context for public discourse. In 1878, Sultan Hamid had already closed the parliament down before “Albanian League of Prizren” was established and the Albanian cause emerged, demanding to be resolved through political means. In 1908, a dynamic Albanianism emerged before the opening of parliament, ready to continue where it left off thirty years ago.¹³⁶⁴

Now, Albanian lawmakers, many of whom represented a new generation of leaders of the Albanian League of Prizren, gained a public forum to debut immunity over government policies. On the other side of the scale, the Young Turk Committee brought to power a new and determined political leadership, which acted as soon as possible “*to suppress the tower system on the outskirts of the Empire*”,¹³⁶⁵ thus opening up internal “fronts”, mainly with Albanians, the most deserving of their coming to power and the return of parliamentarism.

In addition to the difficulties, disagreements, and at the end open confrontation with the Young Turks, culminating in major uprisings in Kosovo, such as those of 1910-12, leading to the proclamation of the Albanian state and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the four-year time of the second parliamentarism and the constitution (1908-1912), Albanians will use for political warfare and its legal means to act within parliament, government and institutions, in order to achieving their civil rights in accordance with the constitution. At the same time, despite pressure from the Young Turks and their efforts to oversee all pores of life with utmost commitment to be given the color of an Ottoman centralist nationalism of a fanatical degree, Albanians will not only refuse to give up their demands for cultural, social and national emancipation, but will be able to maintain the continuity of the course related to their right to

¹³⁶² See “*Leka*”, Shkodër, XII (1940), documents no. 36,377, pp. 39-42, 45-47.

¹³⁶³ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 256.

¹³⁶⁴ Idem, p. 257.

¹³⁶⁵ Idem, p. 258.

be recognized as a nation and that of administrative and political autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. Even when forced by the majority of Young Turks to be over-represented in parliament, even when the centralist government through military campaigns and numerous provocations try to outlaw many of the local (feudal) leaders, supporters of Sultan Hamid and his absolutism, against whom drastic punitive measures will be taken, with measures affecting a large part of the population of the vilayets of Kosova and Shkodra, the Albanian political class will behave responsibly and in accordance with the trust won by voters.

26 MPs won the trust of voters from the Albanian provinces to the Ottoman parliament, of which only a part of them, such as Ismail Qemali, Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Shahin Kolonja, Bedri Pejani, and others, represented the Albanian patriotic forces, acting in parliament as opponents of the Young Turk policies towards Albanians.

The trust gained for the Albanian deputies went through very discriminatory circumstances, as the electoral law announced by the Young Turks on September 15, 1908 did not recognize non-Turkish nationalities and declared them all the inhabitants of the “Ottoman” Empire, which conditioned competing for MP by having Ottoman affiliation, mastering of the Turkish language, and the imposition of a high wealth census, excluding from the elections broad strata of the civilian population. Thus, due to the violation of the electoral law, the Catholic population of Shkodra boycotted the elections and so did the population of Mitrovica, in the Vilayet of Kosova, where Isa Boletini, Sultan’s great and permanent friend, had his feud and enjoyed support by a good portion of the population. In addition, the Young Turks used all means to force voters to vote in favor of Turkish and pro-Turkish MPs, who were candidates for the “*Union and Progress*” Committee.”¹³⁶⁶

To see how discriminatory this campaign was by the Young Turks, which did not spare even the founders of the party, those who had done the most for its establishment and strengthening, but who after the victory of the revolution did not go adhere to the new nationalist-centralist course of the leading group with fanatical Ottoman affiliation, best evidence is set by the defeat of Ibrahim Temo in the Sanjak of Elbasan by the young Turkish candidate Abdulah Mahir Efendi. Temo, although a founder of the “*Unity and Progress*” Committee and at the same time one of the most deserving of the great opposition Movement in the Ottoman Empire, did not get the support of his party, precisely because he did not want to divide political Ottomanism, much less confronting Albanianism and its interests.¹³⁶⁷

Ismail Qemali faced similar experiences in Vlora, Hasan Prishtina in the Sanjak of Prishtina and Vlora, respectively, and the same did other Albanian patriots, who managed to win, but with great difficulty, as their opponents were not the only counter-candidates from the ranks of the Young Turks but their local committees too, which did not hesitate to use police and military violence for campaign purposes in some parts.

Despite these measures, a good number of Albanian patriots managed to enter the Ottoman Parliament and this will be an important test for the Albanian National Movement to fight in the circumstances of parliamentarism, which were at least democratic in their fight for their interests. That will happen. Ismail Qemali, elected leader of the group of Albanian deputies in the parliament, was also put in charge of the liberal opposition, which in December 1908 became a separate party called “*Ahrar*” (“*Liberals*”). . This party also united around itself deputies of other nationalities of the Ottoman Empire: Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, who came up with demands for the decentralization of the administration of the Ottoman Empire and for self-rule of the national provinces.¹³⁶⁸

The “*Liberals*”, although with little space to act in the parliament dominated by the Young Turks, came out with demands for self-government of national provinces and for national education in Albania and Macedonia, which was followed by a fierce nationalist demonstration

¹³⁶⁶ “*Historia e Popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 396.

¹³⁶⁷ See: Prifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*”, Prishtinë, 1996.

¹³⁶⁸ Idem, p. 397.

of the Young Turks, warning of harsh measures against all those undermining Ottoman centralism. On the occasion, the finger was pointed at the Albanian vilayets, which were mentioned as supporters of the absolutist government of Sultan Hamid, wanting to remain out of the control of law and order. In order to discipline them, the Young Turks launched a campaign against Isa Boletini, as he refused to join the “*Unity and Progress*” Committee.¹³⁶⁹

Maintaining his respect for Sultan Hamid, and as will be seen on several occasions, Isa Boletini will try to encourage his supporters against the Young Turks, initially trying to avoid feuds with the new kaymakam of Mitrovica by withdrawing to Boletin. But it will not be long before he is declared an “opponent” of the constitution. A punitive campaign was launched against him made up of artillery and 1,500 soldiers. After an initial unequal fight, Isa Boletini and his entourage retreated to the surrounding villages to settle in Isniq, Peja.¹³⁷⁰

The military punitive forces of the 18th Mitrovica Division, commanded by Xhavit Pasha, pursued him there as well, and in March 1909 they surrounded Isniq and vicinity demanding his surrender. Boletini withdrew from there, but the wrath of the Turkish army will not spare the area and its surroundings from destruction that followed by top-guns.¹³⁷¹

The campaign against Isa Boletini and other measures that Xhavit Pasha undertook in Kosova, such as those for tax collection and law enforcement for compulsory military service, which were subject to all citizens of the Empire, greatly aggravated the situation in the country. Protests and armed resistance began to take place in various parts, attaining increasing proportions, starting from Mitrovica, Peja, Prizren and Prishtina to extend as far as Dibra. There were also armed clashes with the Ottoman army in some parts of Central Albania, which then spread to the South. The reactions of the Ottoman expeditions to those who refused to submit to the obligation of military service were harsh. The Young Turk authorities, in order to break the resistance of the Albanians against the involvement in the Ottoman army, only in Janina (Janina), in March 1909, shot and killed 80 Albanian soldiers.¹³⁷²

The Young Turk nationalist policy, which would soon forget the demands for “*freedom, equality, brotherhood without distinction of religion and ethnicity*” with which it had gathered around the various nationalities of the Ottoman Empire drawing them to the revolution, disappointed not only the Albanians, who had done the most for them to come to power, but equally so many of its initiators, who had not imagined so the role of this development.

This situation was exploited by supporters of Sultan Hamid, but also by the “*Ahrar*” opposition, taking part in an anti-revolutionary conspiracy, as it has been called in history, although it was not, as it was an unsuccessful military rebellion, quickly extinguished.

Regardless of how that event will be assessed, it can be said that the opposition from the ranks of “*Ahrar*”, having the support of some representatives of the leadership and Turkofile clerics of Dibra and Kosova, hoped to win over Albanians and especially military units, especially Albanians dissatisfied with the Young Turk regime, who were considered decisive during such changes.¹³⁷³ Why this did not happen at the proper scale, the reasons must certainly be sought in the fear of involvement in events which were not so clear and, more importantly – because Albanians did not join the call by “*Ahrar*” - this had to do with the fact that even Sultan Hamid, despite his great words, had not been able to protect the interests of Albanians in relation to the Great Powers and especially with the Slavic neighbors, to whom he had granted great privileges to the detriment of the Albanians, privileges which, however, with the coming of the Young Turks to power, had ceased as such.

However, some of the Albanian officers, led by Hamdi Çausi and some of the feudal lords (Isa Boletini) had supported what would be called counter-revolution and by means of the

¹³⁶⁹ Idem, p. 398.

¹³⁷⁰ Idem, p. 398.

¹³⁷¹ Idem, p. 398.

¹³⁷² Idem, p. 399.

¹³⁷³ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 255.

military forces made available to them reflected elements of the old policy, connected after Sultan Hamid through the privileges and support they enjoyed from him.¹³⁷⁴

It is very likely that Ismail Qemali also played a role in the first uprising, convincing the Lower House to accept the new government formed by Sultan Hamid,¹³⁷⁵ although during an investigation the charge of conspiracy would be dropped.

However, the decisive role in igniting the flames of this rebellion was played by the troops of the First Army, most of them Albanians (those guarding the Sultan and the Palace) who would not accept to obey the orders of the Minister of War to serve in Yemen, as this weakened their privileges in the capital. The Young Turks, however, continued to take other measures after the departure of the two loyal battalions of the Sultan from the ranks of the Albanians to Manastir, to deprive Sultan Hamid and the Palace of any power. This provoked the reaction of the loyal units of the Sultan from the ranks of the First Army, joined by students of theology and other elements of the population of the capital, and together they marched in the square in front of Hagia Sophia demanding the application of the sacred law of the Islamic religion.¹³⁷⁶

Unable to calm the demonstrators, Hysein Hilmi, the grand vizier, resigned and, on April 14, the Sultan quickly appointed another successor, who was a candidate for his Sultanate. During the uprising, protesters fired on a number of army officers and set fire to several offices of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee, which had returned to power.

The course of events, however, did not benefit what will be called a counter-revolution, as the Young Turks soon gained the support of Mahmut Shevket Pasha, the former Governor of Kosova, who was already the commander of the Third Army, the headquarters of which was located in Thessaloniki, where Albanians also played an important role. He accepted the invitation to quell the uprising.

Supported by the commander of the Second Army, headquartered in Edirne, Mahmud Shevket Pasha formed the so-called “*Action Army*” (*Hareket Ordusu*), which before it reached Istanbul numbered up to 25,000 regular troops, as well as 15 thousand volunteers, including in the last category 4000 Bulgarians, 2000 Greeks and 700 Jews. Bajram Curri and Çerqiz Topulli brought with them 8000 Albanians; Njazi Bey added 1800 people from Resnja to these troops. On April 24, this force, made up of various nationalities (with more than half of them Albanians), easily entered Istanbul and soon captured the city.¹³⁷⁷

The committee decided to use what the counter-revolution described as a means to overthrow Sultan Hamid, and on April 27, four members of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee notified the Sultan of his deposition. The group consisted of two Albanian Muslims (one of whom was Esad Pasha Toptani), a Jew and an Armenian. Esad Pasha Toptani handed over the deposition decree to the Sultan with the words:

“*The nation has deposed you of throne*”.¹³⁷⁸

Reshat Efendi (1848-1918), Abdul Hamid’s brother, became the new Sultan, Mehmed V, who ruled until his assassination in 1918. Abdul Hamid was deported to Thessaloniki, staying at house arrest until World War One brought him back to Istanbul.

Following the suppression of the counter-revolution, the “*Union and Progress*” Committee and Mahmud Shevket Pasha emerged as the two main centers of political power. Mahmut Shefqet Pasha was put in charge of the army and did so in the name of “merit” that he had saved the revolution. He first took over as general inspector of the three First Armies, a new command

¹³⁷⁴ Idem, p. 255.

¹³⁷⁵ On the role of Albanians in the first uprising in more detail see: Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, (“*Crescent and eagle*”), Tirana, 2007; Ismail Qemal Vlora: “*Kujtime*”, Tiranë; Eqrem bej Vlora: “*Kujtime*”, Tiranë, 2001; Bartl, Peter: “*Die Albanischen Muslime zur Zeit der Nationalen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung 1878-1912*”, Wisbaden, 1968; Clyer, Nathali: “*Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2009.

¹³⁷⁶ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 254.

¹³⁷⁷ Idem, p. 254.

¹³⁷⁸ Idem, p. 255.

that suited him, and then, in January 1910, he became war minister, a post he held until he resigned. on July 9, 1912.

Following the suppression of the counter-revolution, the “*Unity and Progress*” Committee and Mahmud Shevket Pasha emerged as the two main centers of political power. Mahmud Shevket Pasha was put in charge of the army and did so in the name of “merit” of having saved the revolution. He first took over as general inspector of the three First Armies, a new command that suited him, and then, in January 1910, he became war minister, a post he held until he resigned on July 9, 1912.¹³⁷⁹

To “save the state”, the “*Union and Progress*” Committee and the army responded with one of the toughest centralist policies, under the pretext of “restoring order” wherever it had been disrupted or opposed. For Albania, which already labeled with the anathema of the “*outlaw country*”, this construct was built by Serb-Orthodox propaganda from the time of the Eastern Crisis onwards, opening the way to the destruction of its ethnic identity embraced by the Young Turks for almost the same goals, meaning a military campaign for the establishment of order and security, the price of which was the loss of many privileges (local government according to the Kanun, carrying weapons and non-payment of many taxes), which they enjoyed over the last three centuries.

The time of Sultan Hamid’s absolutism and Islamism and his policy of converting Muslim Albanians to a pillar of support for the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans had passed, although the Sultanate had never really tried to bring it to life, since the card of Islamism on which it relied was unstable and dangerous even for the Albanians themselves thus targeting the neighbors and opponents of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the European part. Instead, the July Revolution, at least in appearance, brought about a “*vision of order and progress*”, based on Ottomanism, which placed more emphasis on *unity* than on *diversity*, and which was also mixed with Islamism and Turkism.¹³⁸⁰

The *union*, based on the Islamist-Turkish mix, which denied others national identity along with demands for internal governance, was seen by Albanians as a double betrayal: on the one hand, because under the new government they lost their defensive ability, as they had during Sultan Hamid’s time to defend themselves even in the event of an attack by neighbors, and on the other hand they lost the opportunity to turn local government, regardless of how much it was, into a political government accordingly with the program of the Albanian National Movement. That these issues were not coincidental will be demonstrated by the adoption of an anti-gang law, which gave the military the right to intervene to collect weapons where it deemed it required by “national interest”.

According to this law, the Young Turks could interfere in every inch of Albanian land without exception, because Albanians from the time of the Janissaries onwards enjoyed the “privilege” of free weapons. But despite this, the Albanian vilayets had never been “*out of law and order*” or “*feudal gangs*”.

In the circumstances of Kanun and local government implementation, the weapon had been part of the internal rule. The order of the Janissaries, not only showed an understanding for an “armed Albanian”, but it considered him the best defender of the homeland. So it was no coincidence that the Janissaries in the European part, and not only, in case of crises or wars, always relied on the protective ability of Albanians and their eagerness to use weapons to prove imperial patriotism, which meant also love for his own land.¹³⁸¹

¹³⁷⁹ Prifti, Kristaq: “Doktor Ibrahim Temo”, Prishtinë, 1996, pp. 244-249.

¹³⁸⁰ Idem.

¹³⁸¹ On the “privilege” of Albanians to bear arms during the Ottoman Empire and their role in the social and political life of the country see: “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002; Rizaj, Skënder: “*Kosova gjatë shekujve XV, XVI dhe XVII*”, Prishtinë, 1982; Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007; Faensen, Jürgen: “*Die Albanische Nationalbewegung*”, Wiesbaden, 1980; Bartl, Peter: “*Die albanische Muslime zur Zeit der Nationalen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung 1878-1912*”, Wiesbaden, 1968; Siebertz, Paul: “*Albanien und die Albanesen*”, Wien, 1910; Godon, Marie Amelia von: “*Aus dem neuen Albanien*”, Wien, 1914; Durham, Edith: “*Brenga e ballkanasve*”, Tiranë, 2000.

After the eradication of the counter-revolution, in cooperation with the militant wing of the Young Turks, who had already usurped most of the power, Mahmud Shevket Pasha was putting the army on politics, a reality that will have a great impact on the further developments. This role of the military will be reflected more during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of Atatürk's Turkey rather than in defense of Ottomanism. However, in those circumstances, the military already considered itself a "Guardian of the Constitution" (*Nigahban-i Mesrutiyet*), while the "Union and Progress" Committee relied on it to ensure order and security as the spirit of militarism had already penetrated into its main bodies carrying denominations of that nature such as: "Silah" ("Weapon"), "Süngü" (Bayonet), "Bıçak" ("Knife"), "Kursum" ("Bullet"), "Bomba", and the like.¹³⁸²

It is clear that militarism in politics on the part of the Young Turks was in line with the Ottoman nationalist and centralist doctrine and should have served to achieve its goals. Under such circumstances, the military was the one which, through direct military action, had to pave the way for "order". And this will confront the Albanians directly through military expeditions, creating soon a very aggravated situation, especially considering a statement by Mahmud Shevket Pasha saying that "the only solution to the Albanian issue is the baton". The powerful general believed strongly in a violent suppression of the uprisings.¹³⁸³

This will be a fatal belief for the fate of the Ottoman Empire itself, as reliance on the punitive and repressive forces of the army and its use for such purposes will bring complete militarization of Ottoman society, which will provoke not only Albanians, but it will also provoke the Great Powers. The emergence of such a course will be taken as a sufficient sign that the agreement on the preservation of the *status quo*, reached since the Congress of Berlin back in 1878, not only could no longer be held, but by holding to this way and by suppressing national identities by means of the baton, the Young Turks turned to its main destroyers. It was clear that no European people, at the stage of national and state-building emancipation, would accept to sacrifice national interests for the Ottoman nationalist-militaristic "ideals" by which nothing was gained but rather lost, even that which once represented something.

In the face of these circumstances, Albanians, however, will be forced to find internal reconciliation, which they had largely lacked since the Albanian League of Prizren and beyond, in order to bring into play both feudal and conservative structures of society. Albanians, who were again at the forefront of the resistance to thwart the government's efforts "to gain more control", encouraging the current of the new bourgeoisie, mainly supportive of the Young Turk Revolution, to continue that parliamentarism should be used to present national demands, no matter how much they were taken into account.

The circumstances were already in line with the common Albanian position, because both currents had proven that neither the Sultanate, which had already lost its time, nor Ottomanism, to which the time had come, were guarantors of the Albanian cause. On the contrary, it was very clear that just like Sultan Hamid, who once considered Albanians an "Islamic barricade" in the European part, the Young Turks were similarly looking for Ottomanism.

Understanding this truth, as well as adapting to new circumstances, did not make things easier for Albanians. Realizing that the Albanians would not give up their armed resistance, and would not give up the parliamentarism and the constitution, which had brought them a most decisive and important support in order to use their space for the realization of political demands related to autonomy, the Young Turks and Mahmud Shevket Pasha, will try to place the fight against them to where its source was, thus breaking the resistance of Albanians by military means in the first place by attacking what was related to internal self-government that had been tolerated for centuries.

¹³⁸² Gawrysh, Geograd: "Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja", Tiranë, 2007, p. 260.

¹³⁸³ Idem, p. 261.

RESUMPTION OF MILITARY CAMPAIGNS IN ALBANIA AND THE 1909-1911 UPRISINGS

The Young Turks, led by General Mahmud Shevket Pasha, who helped them return to power after the counter-revolution of 1909, wanted to demonstrate their centralist and nationalist course, through military violence in Kosovo, in one of the most powerful and important Albanian vilayets, where the Albanian League of Prizren of 1878 for the first time promoted the demand of an autonomous Albanian state, which, for a while, was even coming to life before it was violently destroyed. The newly-appointed governor of Kosovo, Majar Bey, who was also a member of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee, received clear instructions to implement a tough line against Kosovo, relying on the law of war.

In addition to the tough campaign to collect taxes and enforce compulsory military service, he began recording the entire population, property, and equipment, creating a strict oversight regime that destroyed tradition and affected the family. Consistent with this, he appointed military tribunals, with power to act swiftly and harshly, which further aggravated the situation, already on the verge of eruption.

This behavior will force the Albanian deputies to raise the issue in the parliament demanding accountability. In the Chamber of Deputies, Mehmed Ferid Pasha of Vlora, recently appointed interior minister, defended the government’s policy in Kosovo, arguing that it was in line with “*setting the order*”. But Albanian lawmakers, led by Said Bey of Shkup and Hysein Fuat Pasha of Prishtina, voiced their criticism of the methods used by General Javid Pasha, which included indiscriminate use of artillery, destroying many innocent families’ homes. They were also outraged by the way the rebels were sentenced, calling them “*reactionaries*” (*mürtesi*).¹³⁸⁴

Hasan Prishtina also took part in these fierce debates in the Ottoman Parliament, as expected. He criticized the government for a premeditated campaign of settling accounts with Albanians, which, although justified “by order”, was in fact intended to force them give up their political demands, which had to do with self-government (autonomy) and emancipation (national identity) for which they had fought and had to be met with understanding instead of being provoked and punished.¹³⁸⁵

Hasan Prishtina also harshly criticized the government for giving Javid Pasha a free hand in Kosovo to carry out severe terror, in the “*Tanin*” newspaper.¹³⁸⁶ On the occasion, he demanded that the example of the great reformer Mit’hat Pasha be followed in Kosovo, who had brought order and prosperity to the Danube province. Hasan Prishtina demanded that the Sublime Porte finally understand the truth that it was not repression and military violence that could restore normalcy in Kosovo, but the opening of talks on the real demands of Albanians related to their autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

The issue of Albanian autonomy, as the only option that would reconcile them with the Ottoman Empire, but that at the same time would be the fairest solution, with which life in the European part would be extended, will be raised by Ismail Qemali in a manifesto, published in the newspaper “*La Nazione Albanese*”,¹³⁸⁷ addressing with the call to “*Albanian Brothers*” and distributed in many parts of Albania. Ismail Qemali pointed out that Albanians, who had been fighting for human rights and freedom for a hundred years, were now in danger of being lost as a nation. On this occasion, realizing the nationalistic essence of the Young Turk regime, he called

¹³⁸⁴ Idem, 267.

¹³⁸⁵ Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina – një lëvizje kombëtare e Demokratike shqiptare 1908-1912*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 40.

¹³⁸⁶ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 267.

¹³⁸⁷ See article “*Shpresa jonë, jeta jonë të jetë vetëudhërimi i Shqipërisë*” (“*Our hope, our life to be the self-command of Albania*”), published in “*La Nazione Albanese*”, on 15 July 1909

on them not to rely on the Committee for “*Unity and Progress*”. As he said, after the proclamation of (constitutional) freedom, Albanians more than any other nation hoped they would have an opportunity to work for the advancement of their language, but they were lied to. Evidence of this was the crimes Javid Pasha was committing in Upper Albania, as well as the divisions that the Young Turks were sowing among Albanians. Thus, Ismail Qemali concluded that the only way to save the nation from the greed of foreigners would be to fight for Albania’s autonomy:

“*Our hope, our life, needs to be: Albania's self-command under the shadow of the Ottoman Empire.*”¹³⁸⁸

In this document, Ismail Qemali presented the political program for the solution of the Albanian issue, which he saw in the establishment of an autonomous Albanian state. For this, all areas where the Albanian language was spoken, inhabited by the Albanian population, had to be united in a single vilayet, which would bear the name of “*Albanian Vilayet*” (*Arnavutluk Vilayet*) with its capital Ohri or Elbasan. The borders of autonomous Albania from the Vilayet of Janina will include the sanjaks of the center (of Janina), Preveza, Gjirokastra and Berat; from the Vilayet of Shkodra - the Sanjak of Shkodra with Malësia and the Sanjak of Durrës; from the Vilayet of Manastir - the sanjak of the center (Manastir), Kaza of Grebena from the Sanjak of Selifixa, the sanjaks of Dibra, Korça and Elbasan; from the Vilayet of Kosova - the sanjaks of Shkup, Prishtina, Peja, and Prizren.¹³⁸⁹

Autonomous Albania would be governed by a governor sent from Istanbul supported, as an executive body – by a Council of Elders. Lessons in all schools would be taught in Albanian. Albanian would be used, along with Turkish, in high schools. All civil and military officials would be Albanian. The army, consisting of Albanians, would serve within Albania’s borders.

Like Sami Frashëri, Ismail Qemali thought that the state organization of autonomous Albania should be such that when the Ottoman Empire disintegrated, Albania would stand on its own feet emerging as an independent state.¹³⁹⁰

Albanian political demands for constitutional freedoms and autonomy, such as those put forward by Hasan Prishtina in the Turkish parliament and influential Ottoman newspapers, as well as Ismail Qemali’s published in “*La Nazione Albanese*” in July 1909, the Ottoman government not only refused to listen to them, but ordered Javid Pasha instead to continue the campaign, which, as he stated to the newspaper “*La progres de Salonique*” (The Progress of Thessaloniki) it intended “*no more than to liquidate some Albanian rebels.*”¹³⁹¹

However, Albanians in Istanbul and other parts of the country continued to protest, announcing that the road taken by the Young Turks would primarily harm the Ottoman Empire, as it opened the first cracks for interference by the neighbors of the Albanians to their lands. This was clearly emphasized by a memorandum addressed to the Minister of Interior, Talat Bey on September 21, 1909 by Albanian MPs Dr. Ibrahim Temo (founder of the Young Turk Committee) and Zenel Abedini from Gjilan, stressing: “*Instead of using weapons against them - spread education and eliminate ignorance.*”¹³⁹²

At the initiative of these deputies in Istanbul, at the end of October, the “*National Initiative Committee*” was formed defending the Albanian resistance. The committee called on the government to end its military campaign and return to methods of finding a political solution. Among the proposed measures were the following:

- *to send a commission to Northern Albania to conduct investigations in the country on the causes of the events set out above;*

¹³⁸⁸ Idem.

¹³⁸⁹ Gawrych, George: “Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja”, Tiranë, 2007, and “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 406.

¹³⁹⁰ Prifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*”, Prishtinë, 1996, pp. 244-253.

¹³⁹¹ “*Le Progres de Salonique*”, 20 September 1909.

¹³⁹² Prifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*”, Prishtinë, 1996, pp. 256-258.

- all those who had committed evil acts to be punished according to the laws;
- the compulsory military service should not extend to the Vilayets of Shkodra, Kosova and Manastir, which has never been known by the population and measures to be taken for an economic development of the country. The requests were accepted and signed by all Albanian deputies.¹³⁹³

After the big protests against the Young Turk government by the Albanians and also by foreign representatives, especially Austro-Hungarians and the Italians, Istanbul urged Javid Pasha to talk to Albanians, though with additional instructions to not give up the path he had begun, that is, “establishing order”. He did so with the people of Luma by promising he would withdraw on condition that they obey the orders of the government. This, however, did not change the situation, as the Young Turks militaristic course of “setting order” through military force in “stubborn areas” remained in force. This caused more uprisings in the Vilayet of Kosova, spreading largely letting the Turkish government know that through military means it was not able “bring Albanians to their senses through the use of the stick”, as Mahmud Shevket Pasha used to say. Interior Minister Talat Bey was forced to consider the demand of Albanians that Javid Pasha not only leave Rumelia, but also be brought to justice as the cause of the Kosova riots.¹³⁹⁴

The violence perpetrated by Javid Pasha and the Ottoman army against the Albanians deepened the gap between the Albanians and the Young Turks, thus strengthening the conviction of the Albanians that their interests as a nation were quite different from those of the Young Turks. This was best presented in a correspondence sent from Shkup (Skopje) and published in the newspaper “*Dielli*” on November 26, 1909, stating the following:

*“Nationalism benefited a lot from the behavior of the Young Turks, as after the events of Luma, the national movement in Kosovo began to revive even more, the ideas and desires for self-rule for Albania spread so much that even with 20 years of propaganda we would not have been able to achieve them.”*¹³⁹⁵

The revival of the National Movement in Kosovo, reflected in putting up a large-scale armed resistance, which was becoming more and more wide-ranging, was a result of the hostile course of the Young Turks towards the Albanians. It culminated with the decree to close down Albanian schools and clubs on April 5, 1910, followed with the holding of the Second Congress of the Manastir, when Albanians, even after all the campaign undertaken against the Albanian alphabet, opted for the Latin. Adding to this the continuation of the military campaign bringing back the expeditions of Javid Pasha, always in search of tax collection and establishing “law and order”, then the spring of 1910 could not be other than a flash of cloud of armed resistance against the Young Turk government and their course against the Albanian National Movement.

In order to prevent this development, the Albanian senators and deputies, through talks with the Young Turks, the government and the parliament, wanted to ensure the development and progress of the Albanian nation and the preservation of their national territory. In fact, for this purpose, at the end of 1909, a special Albanian commission was formed in Istanbul to regulate Albanian relations. This, in fact, “was a kind of unnamed, unofficial Albanian representation or government.”¹³⁹⁶

That commission included: Sylejman Pasha, senator; Aziz Pasha, MP of Berat; Hasan Prishtina, MP of Prishtina; Mehmed Pasha, General, and Rexhep Efendia, Mufti of Manastir.¹³⁹⁷

However, the deeper the political and diplomatic activity of the Albanian parliamentarians, the harsher Javid Pasha behaved towards the population of Kosovo. The fall of Hilmi Pasha’s cabinet and its replacement with Haki Pasha, where no Albanians took part, will undoubtedly

¹³⁹³ Idem.

¹³⁹⁴ Prifti, Kristaq: “*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*”, Prishtinë, 1996, p. 256.

¹³⁹⁵ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 411.

¹³⁹⁶ Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 41.

¹³⁹⁷ Idem, p. 41.

help. From the very first meeting of the Council of Ministers, Haki Pasha will promote his anti-Albanian stance with the following words:

*“The biggest threat to Turkey, of all the nations living in our empire, are the Albanians; it is a great fear for it not to waken up from a deep sleep and recover, not to get knowledge in its own language, as then the European Turkey will go down the drain.”*¹³⁹⁸

In the face of this situation, the dissatisfaction of Albanians expressed through armed resistance became apparent in the first days of spring. Many young people, in order to avoid military service, went to the mountains and rebelled, even outside any organizational supervision. As other reasons were added to this, then the gap between Albanians and the Young Turk government became more and more affordable.

This situation was further exacerbated by the military-dominated Young Turk militia, which sought to increase its dominance in politics. So under the pressure of the military, Sultan Mehmed Reshat V, who appeared as a puppet in the hands of the *“Unity and Progress”* Committee, *declared a state of emergency* in Kosovo, in which case the insurgent forces were ordered to disperse as soon as possible; arrest and bring to justice the insurgents; carry out a census of the population and real estate; enforce compulsory military service; collect taxes by force, etc. The Sublime Porte ordered the Minister of War to prepare as soon as possible a punitive expedition, headed by Shevket Turgut Pasha, one of the most famous generals of the Ottoman army at that time.¹³⁹⁹

To counter this campaign, some of the Albanian leaders, mainly supporters of Sultan Hamid: Isa Boletini, Sulejman Batusha and Shaban Binaku, convened an assembly in mid-April, held at Verrat e Llukës, near Deçan. There were no demands in the assembly of a national character, except for the conclusion of a joint defense agreement, which was preceded by an agreement on the forgiveness of blood feuds. Other parts of the Kosova and Shkodra vilayets, which were most threatened by military campaigns, were also invited to join the *Besa*. However, it will be the meeting of the Albanian leaders held in Ferizaj shortly, which set in motion many of the leaders of the Albanian tribes to join a general uprising, starting in the middle of May and taking on significant proportions.

However, it was the Albanian deputies (13 of them 26) in the Ottoman Parliament who, by presenting a report on the difficult situation prevailing in Albania, especially in the Vilayet of Kosova, as a result of the nationalist policy of the *“Union and Progress”* Committee, sought to prevent the escalation of this conflict, which the Young Turks had already foreseen and wanted at all costs to prove their militaristic course. In a statement issued by Kosova MP Nexhip Draga on April 10 on behalf of the group of Albanian MPs, he called it unfair and condemned the government’s decision to declare a state of emergency in the Vilayet of Kosova. Ismail Qemali, Myfit Libohova and other Albanian MPs provided evidence that the events in Kosovo were the result of the country’s mismanagement, the arbitrary behavior of local officials, and the anachronistic nature of the way the Young Turks were governed.¹⁴⁰⁰

Similarly, Hasan Prishtina emphasized during a controversy in the parliament with the Prime Minister Haki Pasha, addressing him with the following words: *“If one day in this country decisions are taken by a true constitutional regime, you will appear before the high court.”* After requesting the dismissal of Haki Pasha’s cabinet, Hasan Prishtina warned with concern:

*“Remember that the country is spinning at lightning speed in the whirlpool of disaster and that this day is a day of trial for the people’s representatives.”*¹⁴⁰¹

For the Young Turks, turning to the disaster that Hasan Prishtina was warning about was not about finding common ground with Albanians, but rather the opposite. So, to make them

¹³⁹⁸ Review *“Leka”*, no. VIII-XII, set I, Shkodër, 1937, p. 338, and Abdylil Tahir: *“Hasan Prishtina”*, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 42.

¹³⁹⁹ *“Historia e Popullit Shqiptar”*, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 427.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Idem, p. 429.

¹⁴⁰¹ Hasan Prishtina: *“Dokumente”* (Parliament session minutes), pp. 38-39, and Abdylil Tahir: *“Hasan Prishtina”*, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 48.

know, of course, by using military force, to accept the government's course "for establishing order".

Crashing the Albanian resistance by military measures was also a clear message for the leaders of the Albanian National Movement involved in parliamentary and state institutions to renounce their well-known demands for autonomy, which were already being laid in parliamentary way and the only way to reject their demands was to keep the Albanians in a state of tension.

With these claims, General Turgut Pasha showed up in the capital of the Vilayet of Kosova, Shkup, with the message that he was there not to cause bloodshed, as accused by some of the Albanian deputies and a part of the domestic and foreign press, but rather to establish order and tranquility and punish all those sowing discord. He stated that the government wished to provide the Albanian people with the benefits of the constitutional order, so it was in their own and the state's interest for all insurgents to surrender.¹⁴⁰²

The Albanian insurgents, already gathered in three parts and under the leadership of three local feudal lords: Isa Boletini, Hasan Hysen Budakova, and Idriz Seferi, taking no heed of Turgut Pasha's request to surrender, continuing their activities in three directions: Isa Boletini, focusing on the Carraleva Gorge and the Ferizaj-Shtimje-Prizren line; Hasan Hysen Budakova in the western part of Ferizaj to Carraleva and Idriz Seferi in defense of the Kaçanik gorge and protection of the Tetova-Shkup road.

Initially, the Ottoman army tested the Albanian forces by means of cautious movements in their direction, with no claims of any major offensive, although a large part of Albanian historians assess it differently, as if it were something else, though the facts speak to the contrary.¹⁴⁰³

From mid-April until its end, the command of the Ottoman forces concentrated in the vicinity of Shkup launching small formations, which failed to weaken the Albanian defense along the Kaçanik Gorge. On the last day of April, after creating a complete picture of the concentration of Albanian insurgents and after being convinced that the resistance leaders did not intend to surrender, Turgut Pasha launched an attack on Kaçanik with mountain infantry, assisted by artillery batteries, shelling the northern part and the surrounding villages.

This was a clear message to the Albanian insurgents from the Ottoman General that his campaign would not stop at breaking the resistance, moving ahead by destroying their material base, such as the villages and properties on which it was based to be able to stand. The forces led by Idriz Seferi resisted, but after a few days they were forced to retreat in the direction of Karadak. This paved the way for the penetration of Ottoman troops in the direction of Ferizaj and Shtime, where they were met by Isa Boletini's insurgents, who did their utmost to stop the Ottoman armies from penetrating in the direction of Carraleva to Prizren and beyond into Dukagjin.

In mid-May, Isa Boletini's insurgents prevented the incursion of Ottoman troops for several days, but this was not enough, as Turgut Pasha, as a prominent military man, acted in accordance to a previously drawn plan, holding the Albanian insurgents detached in different parts, hurting them a bit so as to force them to retreat, and while retreating they would be scattering around faced with either surrender or be annihilated.

In fact, that is what happened. Despite the great resistance and heroic moments that the Albanian insurgents showed during the months of April-June in the battlefields of Kaçanik,

¹⁴⁰² Abdyli, Tahir: "Hasan Prishtina", Prishtinë, 2003, pp. 48-50, and "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 427.

¹⁴⁰³ See "Historia e popullit shqiptar", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, pp. 429-438, on the one hand, the armed resistance of Kosovo to the military campaign of Shefqet Turgut Pasha is presented as a large-scale war, which was attended by over 70 thousand Ottoman soldiers along with artillery and other accompanying formations which will be faced by Albanians (about 20,000 under arms), while in the same chapter, when talking about the causes of defeat, it is argued that there was no general center of organization in the whole vilayet, which was true, and as such, the main foci of war (Kaçanik and Carraleva) remained detached not only from the Albanian vilayets, but also from parts of the Kosova Vilayet.

Carraleva and Karadak gorges and, despite the significant losses brought to the Ottoman forces by surprise attacks, however, Shevket Turgut Pasha's campaign will succeed in fulfilling the intended goals, that is, after laying Kosovo out militarily, move to the north (in Shkodra and Malësia): So, the military will then be deployed to Central Albania and other parts of the country, where, although there was no resistance, such as that of Kosovo, "setting the order" in the stubborn Albanian vilayets was demonstrated, suggesting that the time for "local government" was over.

On the way to Shkodra, the Young Turk terror was extremely fierce and spared nothing. For more, even a few ambushes set up by the inhabitants of the tribe of Shosh and Shala by the bayraktar Mehmed Shpendi, were used as a cause for severe revenges against these tribes, followed by disarming and overrunning of the tower-houses. This is the way he acted against any resistance he encountered with till he entered Shkodra which he left after having established military courts. After a short stay in Mirdita, the Ottoman General went on to Tirana and Elbasan, where military courts sentenced many to long prison terms for participating in legal activities of Albanian clubs, or for being distinguished during the campaign to spread the Albanian school and the Latin alphabet.

The "successful" outcome of Shevket Turgut Pasha's military campaign was first followed by the repeal of what Mahmud Shevket Pasha will do to the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini and the establishment of regular courts to ensure order and security, accompanied by government's fierce war against the Albanian cultural movement. In addition to the decision to close down all Albanian schools, he also banned the publication of newspapers and the publication of Albanian books, whereby a campaign was launched against the editors and their publishers accused of "inciting revolt", with many of the leaders of the main Albanian newspapers imprisoned.¹⁴⁰⁴

Fehmi Zavalani, publisher of "*Bashkimit i Kombit*" ("Union of the Nation") in Manastir and his associates were arrested for publishing an article documenting war crimes of the Ottoman army in Kosovo, documenting data. The editors of other newspapers, Mihail Grameno of Korça and Lef Nosi of Elbasan, were also arrested on similar charges.¹⁴⁰⁵

Similar measures were taken against Albanian language teachers in state schools, as well as against Albanian officials who had participated in the national cultural and educational movement. Hoxha Hafiz Alia was sent into exile for ten years, for the sole reason that he had taught the Muslim religion in Albanian at the Elbasan Normal School.¹⁴⁰⁶

As part of this campaign, the Albanian deputies were not spared either, being accused of supporting the uprising and of having secret connections with the insurgents.

The end of the Kosovo Albanian uprising, and the large-scale terror attacks on the vulnerable population, revealed two things that will be important for further developments:

- the determination of the Young Turks to establish "order" through the use of army, which meant *further militarization of politics*, for which they had the external support, especially of the neighbors of the Albanians and Russia, and

- the unwillingness of the Albanians to oppose it even with armed resistance on a national scale, in order to give a common response which the turn the course of events.

The first issue will be of special importance, because in addition to opening the irreconcilable gap between Albanians and the Young Turk government to the extent of a final break between them, at the same time it highlighted the fact that the Young Turks on their path, except for some verbal "rebuke", did not encounter any opposition from the Great Powers, nor did they risk any trouble with them as to why they chose to take this path. For this, they even got the support of the neighbors of the Albanians (Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks) and Russia. The latter gave the Ottoman government some special material funds to implement as accurately as possible the ""reforms" in the Vilayet of Kosova, among which important for the Russians was

¹⁴⁰⁴ Prifti, Kristaq: "*Doktor Ibrahim Temo*", Prishtinë, 1996, p. 266.

¹⁴⁰⁵ See HHStA, PA XIV/24, Albanien.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Idem.

disarming the Albanians and destroying any core of armed resistance related to political demands.

A hypocritical behavior by the neighbors of the Albanians stands out, first of all of the Serbs and Montenegrins, who, on one hand, to incite the Albanian feudal lords, especially Isa Boletini, with whom they had good relations, for an armed resistance, by providing them with weapons and other material means, on the other hand, Serbian diplomacy and the Belgrade government, through direct channels, demanded from the Sublime Porte precisely to settle accounts with the “Arnaut bandits” in the harshest way and this demand turned it into a “measure” of strengthening trust.

The so-called “Serbian National Council” in some parts of Kosovo, and Serbian clerics serving in Orthodox monasteries, received instructions from Belgrade to work closely with Ottoman rulers and their military agents, providing information on Albanian insurgents and their movements, including details here resulting fatal for many of them.¹⁴⁰⁷

The second issue, namely the unwillingness of the armed resistance to develop on a national scale and being linked to clear political goals, will inform the leaders of the Albanian national movement that in the circumstances in which they found themselves, political plans and parliamentarism can turn into a farce without the possibility of pressure on it by means of nationwide movements, interconnected and interactive at all times and with equal distribution throughout the Albanian ethnic space.

The case of leaving the armed uprising in Kosovo against the oppressive policy of the Young Turk government in the hands of certain local leaders (mostly feudal lords with reputation of having supported Sultan Hamid), proved best that some of the Albanian deputies who had won seats in the Ottoman Parliament winning their mandates as candidates of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee did not care less about the collapse of power of Kosovo’s feudal lords in confrontation with the Young Turks for as long as this was not related to their personal interests, although this at the same time represented a political weakness of the Albanian cause. Suffice it to mention here the conflict of interest between Isa Boletini and Nexhip Draga on the issue of forest concessions in northern Kosovo and the construction of a new steam saw, which the latter received from the Young Turk government, though opposed by the “titled deeds” in possession of the former, which he had received from the Sultan.¹⁴⁰⁸

The first political weakening of the Albanians after the coming to power of the Young Turks will be marked precisely after the end of the military campaign of Turgut Pasha in Kosovo and other parts of Albania during the spring and summer of 1910. On the occasion, the main center of Albanian power, which had brought the Young Turks to power two years before not only had lost its resilient power, but it risked disintegrating in various parts in the direction of Montenegro and Serbia and turning to the prey of their greatest opponents.

These countries, which were interested in such a thing, did not stop working to keep the Albanians divided and also in conflict with the Ottoman Empire, wasting their resistance power beyond any common political project carrying a national platform. It so happened that after the defeat suffered by the Ottoman forces during the months of June and July of that year, Serbia, which in various ways had incited the Kosovo uprising and promised comprehensive assistance to its leaders, after all that will happen, agreed to house only a small part of the insurgents, mainly their leaders (Hysen Budakova, Zejnel Beu of Gjilan, Shaqir Çavdarbashi of Peja and the Mayor of Ostrožub). Meanwhile, insurgents on the northwestern side of Kosovo initially settled

¹⁴⁰⁷ On the issue of cooperation of Kosovo Serbs with the Ottoman government in Kosovo, especially during the uprising of 1910 see Perunović Branko: “*Pisma srpskih konsula iz Pristine*”, Beograd, 1985; Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina në lëvizjen kombëtare demokratike 1908-1933*”, Prishtinë, 2003; Cana, Zekeria: “*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*”, Prishtinë, 1979; Radovanović R. Milan: “*Sokolsko društvo u Prištini od 1909-1912*”, 1969; Hadži-Vasiljević Jovan: “*Četnička akcija u Staroj Srbiji i Makedoniji*”, Beograd, 1928.

¹⁴⁰⁸ For more on the conflict of interests between the Boletini and Dragaj familjes see at Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, pp. 246-248.

on the Cursed Mountains, but once the cold began and they were short of food, they sought to cross over into Montenegro.

Isa Boletini sought help from Cetina to take refuge there with his comrades and their families. Boletini's request was accepted by Montenegro. They settled in Cetina, Podgorica, Shpuza, Niksic, and Ulqin.¹⁴⁰⁹

Along with Isa Boletini, other leaders of the 1910 uprising also took refuge in Montenegro, such as Dedë Gjo Luli, Mehmed Shpendi, Sulejman Batusha, Mirash Ndou, and others from the Shkodra Highlands, who were involved in the resistance against Turgut Pasha, but after he laid siege to Kosovo, turned to the North, so that even there he would "place order" by military force. According to Montenegrin government statements, in 1910 there were about 800 Albanian families in its territory with about 3,000 people. This figure will soon double, as the Ottoman authorities continued their "cleansing" operations in many parts of Kosovo and the North, resulting in the departure of the population from their lands.¹⁴¹⁰

King Nikola would justify the sheltering of Albanians for humanitarian purposes, but as will be seen, Cetina did her best to use this to achieve political goals, which came to light a little later, when he demanded that the Northern Albanians, especially the Catholic tribes from above Shkodra revolt against the Ottoman Empire.

This uprising was important for Cetina as it set the conditions for Montenegro to be involved in the war, from where it would derive benefits against Albanian lands, which it had set its eyes on to annex. Although Russia advised him not to rush into using the Albanians for these purposes because other factors (Austro-Hungarians and Italians, as well as Serbs) could be involved, King Nikola found a way to quell the uprising encouraged by the Albanians themselves. It was about a few collaborators of Montenegro from the ranks of Albanians who had long been associated with Cetina and she kept them close. They called for war promising they had Cetina's help.

But it was not only the Montenegrins and their collaborators who, in those difficult times for Kosovo and the North, demanded military action and armed insurrection. Various committees established long ago in Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and other countries, where the Albanian Diaspora were concentrated, were put into action in search of organizing an uprising, which would begin in the North, but would soon have to include the Middle and the South of Albania.

One of these committees with claims to take over the interaction with other committees abroad, was that of Bari, established by Nikollë Ivanaj. Ivanaj set out to call for an uprising from outside Albania, promising weapons and other oversight. The Bar Committee will certainly be encouraged by the formation in Italy of the "*Pro Albania*" Committee, which was joined by Republicans, Socialists, Democrats and others, who were interested in creating a pro-Italian movement in Albania, which would counter claims by Austria-Hungary and the neighboring countries.¹⁴¹¹

This "pro-Albanian" spirit, evidently driven by certain Italian political interests, influenced many of the Arbëresh to become involved in it, expressing their willingness to go as volunteers to fight in Albania.

The issue of Italian volunteers in Albania had already been made public and turned into a major campaign, as it was planned to be led by Giuseppe Garibaldi's son, Ricciotti Garibaldi, who had announced other "details" about the expedition, which aimed to spread the flame of the anti-Ottoman uprising in Albania. But General Garibaldi's son gave up on the Albanian adventure the moment Italy was preparing to attack Tripoli.

In these circumstances, as the Kosovo Albanians and those of the northern parts received a strong blow from the expedition of Turgut Pasha with many of them forced to seek refuge in Montenegro being under pressure from various sides to continue the war, although the

¹⁴⁰⁹ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 438.

¹⁴¹⁰ Idem.

¹⁴¹¹ Secret report addressed to Aehrenthal from Giesl, p. 12 HHSStA, PA XIV/28, Albanien XX/10.

circumstances were very unsuitable, Austria-Hungary and Great Britain asked the Sublime Porte to pursue a policy of reconciliation with the Albanians and meet some of the conditions. Among the most important conditions were those related to creating conditions for their return home.

Vienna, being not interested on Albanians being instrumentalized for the purposes of Montenegro or Italy and Serbia, warned Cetina not to play with Albanians and their difficulties for political purposes. Through its own diplomatic representatives in Istanbul, and also of its consuls in Shkodra, Skopje and Manastir, Vienna talked to many of the Albanian deputies in Istanbul and to the representatives of their leadership in Kosovo and Shkodra, to give up, as it was said, “joining in foreign adventures” and resume talks with the Sublime Porte to resolve issues through agreements, as uprisings and war would produce even more difficulties. The message to Albanians was clear: with the weakening of Kosovo, they saw the strengthening of Pan-Slavism.¹⁴¹²

Driven by international pressure and the danger that the uprising of Kosovo Albanians and those in the North could be exploited by Vienna for any political or military action that would damage Montenegrin plans, Cetina, at least in the face of it, was forced to take on the role of mediator at the Sublime Porte to return the Albanians to their lands from where they had left during Turgut Pasha’s military campaign. King Nikola intervened with the representative of the Ottoman Empire in Cetina, Sadedin Bey, and the Albanian refugees to find a solution. Albanians set the following conditions:

- 1) return of the weapons that had been taken away from them;
- 2) exemption from taxes imposed on them recently, and
- 3) construction of roads and opening of national schools.¹⁴¹³

The Ottoman envoy called the demands “extremely unacceptable” and advised his government to allow migrants to leave to their fate “as long as they come to their senses”, which is what will happen. However, this will only aggravate the situation, as more and more persecuted Albanians, who sought refuge in this country, would flock to Montenegro. So their number doubled in a short time, and this was causing trouble for Cetina, who began to complain that it was unable to cope with such a large influx of Albanians. Unable to lead them into revolt against the Ottoman Empire, as Russia and Serbia had forbidden it, King Nikola took on the role of a “peacemaker”. He called on the fourteen bayraktars of the Albanian highlanders, with whom he talked about the conditions of return. They formulated their demands in seven points:

- 1) A general amnesty was to be declared by *iradiye*;
- 2) Military service to be carried out only in the vilayets - outside only when sanctioned by Istanbul;
- 3) *Muderizes* (chieftains) of the tribes had to be elected by Albanians;
- 4) *Kaymakams* (deputy prefects) had to be Christians speaking the Albanian language;
- 5) The value of confiscated weapons to be compensated and, if Muslims were armed, Christians would also be armed;
- 6) Seized or confiscated property had to be compensated, and
- 7) All the above points had to be applied to all highlanders.¹⁴¹⁴

The representative of the Ottoman government generally found the demands acceptable and recommended them to the Porte. On November 18, 1910, the response of the Ottoman government, which generally accepted the demands of the Albanians, arrived. There were only a few changes in the details: no money would be paid for weapons, but burned houses would be compensated. After communicating the note to the Montenegrin government, King Nikola gathered the Albanian leaders and informed them of its content. He ordered the highlanders to

¹⁴¹² Idem.

¹⁴¹³ Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 370.

¹⁴¹⁴ Coded telegram addressed to Ritter von Zambaur in Shkodra, Vienna, 19 November 1910, at 7 e 30, p.m., HHStA, PA XIV/33, Albanien XXXIV.

return with their men to their homes. The Governor of Shkodra, Bedri Pasha, would receive them in Tuz and arrange for their return.¹⁴¹⁵

When it seemed that after the return of a number of refugees the situation in Kosovo and in the north would calm down, in Shkodra the conflict between the Albanian highlanders and the Ottoman army would break out again. In March 1911, in the mountains north of Shkodra (Mbishkodra), Dedë Gjo Luli and his men attacked Turkish border posts along the Albanian-Montenegrin border.¹⁴¹⁶

Before the uprising in the North, a part of the Albanian refugees who would not accept to return to their lands from where they came, convinced that the Turkish government would deceive them, as it had done before, formed their Committee in Podgorica, which took care of them, but at the same time considered the possibility of organizing an armed war. The committee was also assisted by Albanian patriots in Montenegro, such as Risto Siliqi, etc., as well as Nikollë Ivanaj, Hilë Mosi, Luigj Gurakuqi, etc., who later moved to Podgorica.

The Podgorica Committee tried to use the assistance of the Montenegrin government, though making every effort to fall into the trap of its policy as little as possible, although this was not easy to achieve, because at the head of the Committee, “for tactical reasons”, was Sokol Baci, known as King Nikola’s man.¹⁴¹⁷

The Podgorica Committee’s “tactical” approach to Montenegro, however, will not save the Albanians from being put under surveillance by Cetina and its plans for an Albanian uprising to start exactly as she wanted: premature, local and carried out mainly by Albanian Catholic tribes, so that from the very beginning it presented a wick of descent for Albanian internal divisions on religious grounds, which is what actually happened.

Thus, the Vali of Shkodra, Bedri Pasha, responded to the uprising of the Hoti highlanders led by Dedë Gjo Luli, Gjek Marash Gjeloshi and others by mobilizing Muslim Albanians, feeling the risk of a “*Catholic-Montenegrin*” connection against Albania.¹⁴¹⁸

Even before the disembarkation of Shevket Turgut Pasha’s units, which had already set sail from Thessaloniki expected to enter into military action within a few days, similar to those of a year before, by which he had managed to enforce peace in Kosovo and the north, the joint Ottoman units reinforced with Albanian Muslim volunteers headed to the northern part of the border inhabited by the Albanian population of the Catholic faith, in a campaign that resembled the beginning of an internal Albanian civil war on religious grounds of which until then Shkodra had been spared.

In order to escape this threat, which was obvious, on March 30 in Cetina, some of the leaders of the uprising gathered, whereupon a memorandum was addressed to the Great Powers. It demanded the following:

- the inviolability of Albanian territories;
- recognizing the Albanian language as an official language in all four vilayets, in offices and courts, and as a language of instruction in schools;
- all officials in Albania should be Albanians and the Albanian nationality to be officially recognized;
- budget revenues to be spent for the benefit of the country;
- Albanian soldiers not to serve outside Albanian lands.

The memorandum was signed by Muharrem Bushati, Isa Boletini, Sokol Baci, Dedë Gjo Luli, Abdullah Aga, Preng Kola, and Mehmed Shpendi, and it is likely to have been written with the help of an Austro-Hungarian emissary, from those whom Vienna had already infiltrated

¹⁴¹⁵ See confident letter by Giesel addressed to Aehrenthal, Cetina, 20 November 1910, no. 102, and - Stavri, Skëndo: “*Zgjidhjet kombëtare shqiptare*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 372.

¹⁴¹⁶ Report by Zambaur addressed to Aehrenthal, Shkodra, 27 March 1911, no. 27. HHStA, PA XIV/33, Albanien, XXXIV.

¹⁴¹⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 443.

¹⁴¹⁸ Report by Zambaur addressed to Aehrenthal, Shkodra, 27 March 1911, no. 24, HHStA, PA IV/33, Albanien, XXXIV.

among Albanians, so as not to allow their uprisings to fall under the full influence of Montenegro or Italy, much less turn them into a war on religious grounds.¹⁴¹⁹

In addition to the Montenegrin influence, the uprising in the Northern Highlands could not have escaped the Italian one. Even in a direct mission in it will be presented Dr. Terence Toçi (Tocci), an Italian-Arbëresh nationalist lawyer. On April 27, 1911, after a visit to the insurgent leaders in Podgorica, Toçi gathered the leaders of Mirdita and Dukagjini, as well as the Muslims of Mat and Dibra, and raised the Albanian flag in Kimëz (Gimis), Mirdita. Toçi was in agreement with the committee of General Ricciotti Garibaldi, who had promised to help him. On the day of the meeting in Kimëz, Albania was declared “free and accepted with its borders in history and language and nationality”. There a short-lived “provisional government of Albania” with Dr. Toçi as president was declared.¹⁴²⁰

Seeing the ever-increasing size of the Albanian uprising as well as the growing opportunities for the involvement of foreign factors (Montenegro, Italy - as was the case with Dr. Toçi when he declared Albania’s independence, notwithstanding that it all seemed a provocative adventure from the outside), the Sublime Porte will again turn to military action, by charging Shevket Turgut Pasha, who landed at Shëngjin in late April. Along with him came Preng Bibë Doda, summoned from Vienna by the Young Turks to prevent Mirdita from getting involved in an uprising which could have Montenegrin or Italian interests behind it.

Albanian rebels ambushed the Ottoman general’s landing with a proclamation published on May 1, 1911, in Albanian, French, German and Italian, unveiling an autonomous program. The statement requested the following:

- 1) Albania to become self-governing with the insurance of the big powers under the shadow of Turkey;
- 2) Albanian schools to be maintained by the government;
- 3) Albanian soldiers not to leave the borders of Albania, except in case of war.¹⁴²¹

The Northern Uprising revived the fighting spirit even abroad, especially among the ranks of the Albanian Diaspora in America, which increasingly raised its voice in defense of the Albanian cause, defined by the demand for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. Fan S. Noli and the Albanian clubs tried to transfer the spirit and demands of the northern uprising to the south of Albania and to articulate them from there. Noli even took the initiative to secure the support of Greece, though Athens, as in other times, insisted that the Albanian uprisings could only take place up to the Shkumbin River!¹⁴²²

Despite such an attitude by Athens, during May, Albanian patriots gathered in Corfu, including Nikollë Ivanaj, Themistokli Gërmenji, Ismail Qemali, Pandeli Cale, Stefan Kondillari, Spiro Bellkameni and others, creating a branch of the Albanian Bari Committee. Meanwhile, efforts to organize an uprising in southern Albania increased.¹⁴²³

In May, on the ninth day of the month, Shevket Turgut Pasha announced that the leaders of the uprising would be handed over to the military court, while those who would surrender within five days, giving up their weapons and obeying the laws of government orders, would benefit from clemency. The proclamation said that if the soldiers were shot, the village elders would be punished along with the culprit. After waiting for four days, the Ottoman general launched a military campaign in the direction of Deçiç, taking the positions that had long been held by the Albanian insurgents.

Ottoman forces were stationed on the Tuz-Deçiç-Kastrati line. Another Ottoman force, led by Ethem Pasha, continued to exert pressure on Gucia. This made the number of Albanians

¹⁴¹⁹ Idem.

¹⁴²⁰ For more see: P. Pal Dodaj: “*Shqypnija e Shqyptarve e Qeverisë së Përkohshme*”, *Hylli i Dritës*, Shkodër, X, (1934), 245-255; *Leka*, op.cit., pp. 514-515 (declaration text included); C. Libardi, op. cit., II, 37-49, 52-53; Krajewski addressed to Grupp, Shkodër, 4 June 1911, no. 99. AMAE, Turquie, Politique Interieure, Albanie, January-June 1911, vol IX.

¹⁴²¹ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 446.

¹⁴²² Idem, p. 447.

¹⁴²³ Idem, p. 447.

displaced from their homes in Montenegro to grow, thus making them more dependent on this country, which was interested to see Albanians in this war lose as much of their fighting power as possible, and on the other hand, see them as refugees falling under the influence of Cetina, so that it might be seen not only “as a savior” but also as a true “protector”. The issue was related to Montenegro’s plans to annex the northern Albanian territories, or establish an Albanian “principality” within the Montenegrin kingdom, under the crown of its son Mirko.¹⁴²⁴

The weakening of the Albanian factor in the north, especially of the Catholic population, as well as the possibility of it being manipulated by Cetina, as it was happening, prompted Austria-Hungary to intervene with the Sublime Porte to change its attitude towards Albanians so that the measures taken to “put it in order” should not cause them to turn into “easy loot” for others. This referred to the influence that Montenegro gained on the Albanians in those circumstances when a good part of them were refugees there. The Austrian intervention had an immediate effect. The Ottoman government, frightened by any new interference in its affairs, announced on June 10, 1911, through the press that the Albanians had been defeated and that, on the occasion of Sultan Mehmed V’s trip to Kosova, a general amnesty would be announced for insurgents.¹⁴²⁵

Sultan Mehmed V’s trip to Kosova, which began with a visit to Shkup on June 11, was full of “reconciling tones”. The Sultan praised the loyalty of the Albanians to the Empire and promised “common life” and “brotherhood”.

In Shkup, some of the local leaders, before the great mass that had come out to receive the Sultan, declared “eternal loyalty” to the Ottoman Empire. After four days, the Sultan traveled to Prishtina, where he signed a general amnesty for all participants in the uprisings of 1910 and 1911. Although Kosovo had been known for its loyalty to the Sultan, the reception was cold. In Fushë Kosovë (Kosovo Plain), where a large Islamist demonstration was expected, people had come only from the surrounding area and nearby villages. Cities like Peja, Gjakova and Prizren had not sent representatives, which proved that a great change had taken place in Kosovo.¹⁴²⁶

On June 18, Shevket Turgut Pasha announced the proclamation of the imperial decree on amnesty. The insurgents had to return within ten days and hand over their weapons. The sultan would make a gift of 10,000 Turkish lira as compensation, in which case the government would compensate the highlanders for the lost or destroyed property.

That the “reconciliation” between Albanians and Ottomans did not seem only a matter of an already closed conflict over the “establishment of order”, with mutual misunderstandings that were being overcome through an agreement relying on political demands, in accordance with those already coming out of the national platform dealing with autonomy, will be taken care of by Ismail Qemali together with some of the leaders of the Albanian National Movement, who during this time was in Cetina to talk to insurgents. Ismail Qemali together with Luigj Gurakuqi and on mediation of the Podgorica Committee, on June 23, on the plateau of Greça (west of Selca, in Malësia e Madhe), convened the General Assembly of the Albanian leaders. The most important document of the uprising, known as the “*Red Book*” (due to the color of the front page of the brochure in which it was printed), drafted by Ismail Qemali and Luigj Gurakuqi, was approved.¹⁴²⁷

The Memorandum contained the following demands:

- *guaranteeing that unconstitutional actions by the central government and local authorities throughout Albania would not be repeated and that the country’s religions and customs would be respected;*

- *recognizing to the Albanian nation the same rights that the others of the Ottoman Empire enjoyed;*

¹⁴²⁴ Skendi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 374.

¹⁴²⁵ Idem, p. 375.

¹⁴²⁶ Idem, p. 377.

¹⁴²⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 450.

- complete freedom for the election of the Albanian deputies, in a number which is in proportion to the population;
- uniting the vilayets where Albanians live, according to administrative decentralization, and harmonizing Turkish laws with the customary laws of the country;
- senior officials to know the language and customs of the country;
- all civil and financial officials to be Albanian, while judges, gendarmes and police officers to be also local;
- appointing a general governor by the Sultan for a certain period of time; using the Albanian language in the administration, courts and assemblies, alongside Turkish, which remained the official language of the central government;
- compulsory military service for all in peacetime to be carried out in the country, while for the inhabitants of the border areas to be organized a special military service, which would be performed in their provinces, to maintain the borders;
- fiscal revenues to be used locally for construction of roads, railways, schools and others, with the exception of those of customs, post office, telegraph, tobacco, alcohol and stamps, which were state monopolies or granted to foreigners as capitulations;
- recognizing the right of villagers to cut down forests based on a tax;
- the general councils should be granted the right to make decisions on the budget of the vilayets and control over the expenses;
- providing necessary funds for the repair of houses and other damages caused by the operations of the Ottoman armies and returning to the Albanians weapons that were taken from them.¹⁴²⁸

The “Red Book” was handed over by representatives of the insurgents to the ambassador of the Ottoman Empire in Montenegro, Sadredin Bey. In order to have the support of the Great Powers to meet their demands, a delegation of insurgents, composing of Luigj Gurakuqi, Dedë Gjo Luli, Sokol Bacaj, etc., handed over the Memorandum to the representatives of the Great Powers in Cetina.

After more than a month, on July 30, 1911, the Ottoman ambassador to Cetina, Sadredin Bey, declared in Podgorica the counter-proposals of the Ottoman government to the demands of the insurgents. They were far from autonomous, which the Albanians demanded in the Greça Memorandum and were limited only to the areas of insurrection.

By this document, the Young Turk government announced full amnesty for all participants in the uprising who were handing over their weapons. The military service would take place inside the Shkodra vilayet and only one year in Istanbul. Bayraktars would also be appointed as directors and members of the administrative councils. The *celepi* would be appointed taking into account the economic situation of the population. Taxes would be collected when Albanians were able to pay. Weapons would be kept with special permission. Two primary schools would be built in the highlands, with state funds, where the Albanian language would be taught. Roads and bridges would be built.¹⁴²⁹

The Highlanders initially opposed the agreement, demanding that attention be focused on the points of the Greça Memorandum. But government officials declined to expand on national demands. Forced by the pressure of the Cetina government, which had agreed with the Russians not to support the demands of the Albanians dealing with autonomy, the highlanders’ agreement with the representatives of the Young Turk government was signed on August 2, 1911. On August 5, the highlanders began to turn into groups. Those who refused to return, including Dedë Gjo Luli, one of the leaders of the uprising, were deported by the Montenegrin government beyond Morača.

¹⁴²⁸ Idem, p. 451.

¹⁴²⁹ Idem, p. 457.

By this, the Young Turk government, as well as the neighbors of the Albanians, managed to detach the uprising of the Northern Highlands from the context of a large uprising and claims that it would come out with political demands of national proportions, as claimed by the Greça Memorandum to shrink it into a local rebellion, which justified both the “excessive” state violence to establish “order and law” and also, to some extent, the response of Albanians to it, as it contradicted their centuries-old tradition of self-rule.

In general, the uprising in the Northern Highlands remained detached from a general response, and it can even be said that it was doomed to fail, because to a large extent the direction and the real dimensions were determined by external factors: the Ottoman military and the intervention of Montenegro and partly Italy.

It was no coincidence that the Ottoman military factor began its campaign of “law enforcement” in the Northern Highlands, after previously dealing with Kosovo during the spring and summer of 1910, when during the military operations Shevket Turgut Pasha brought down the resistance of Kosovo Albanians led by local feudal lords Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, Hasan Budakova, Bajram Curri, and others, mostly loyal to Sultan Hamid.

Kosovo’s “appeasement” through savage terror and disarmament of the majority of the population, as well as the departure of insurgents (several thousand of them) to Montenegro, Serbia and elsewhere as refugees along with their leaders Isa Boletini and others, seeking refuge in Montenegro, had practically detached it from the possibility of connection with the Northern Highlands.

The intervention by Montenegro and to some extent by Italy, in the developments of spring and summer of 1911 in the North of Albania had a significant impact for it remaining isolated and outside the concepts of the Albanian National Movement, and not only. Although Montenegro will use its “traditional generosity” in supporting Albanian neighbors in difficult times, it will continue to strive to guide the resistance of Albanians in accordance with its own political interests setting the conditions for the Catholic Albanians to separate from the rest and thus “integrate” them into the Montenegrin kingdom, by means of some “Catholic” autonomy (such as that of Mirdita), or to separate as many parts of the Albanian ethnicity as possible, including Shkodra, as it did a little later. If during the Kosovo uprising of the summer of 1910, it provided the Kosovo insurgents with weapons and shelter support, it was now doing so by determining that this would weaken the fighting ability of both Kosovo and the Ottomans at the same time - which suited Montenegro and Serbia - in the case of the Northern Highlands, Cetina focused on the Albanian Catholic tribes (Shoshi, Hoti, Gruda, Kuqi, and others), in order to bring them into a double conflict: with The Ottomans and the Albanian Muslim population of Shkodra and the surrounding area. In these parts also fratricidal war on religious grounds occurred. Although on the intervention of Ismail Qemali, Luigj Gurakuqi and other patriots, in the Assembly of Greça of March 23, 1911, with the approval of the Memorandum of Greça, the Northern uprising lost the label of an Albanian war fighting for foreign interests and on a religious basis, though it will not be free from such influences. This is best confirmed by the case of an adventure by the Italo-Arbëresh Terenc Toçi and the activity of Preng Bibë Doda in Mirdita, when the former will manage to declare a kind of “independent” Catholic Albania in Gimiz of Mirdita!

Despite the difficulties and weaknesses that the armed resistance of 1910 (in Kosovo) and 1911 in the Northern Highlands (part of Mbishkodra) will face, despite the serious consequences that hit the local population during and after the military campaigns, however it will highlight the deep disagreements and contradictions of the Albanians with the Young Turks, which were unlikely to be removed. On the contrary, they made clear the so-called disagreement over what would soon lead to a new and final explosion, such as that of next spring and summer. Then the Albanians will jointly decide on an all-out uprising to overthrow the Young Turk government, as actually happened in August next year, thus accepting the demands of the Albanians leading to the First Balkan War and the declaration of independence of Albania.

Signs of this development will force the capricious Young Turk government to see and even accept, as soon as it signs the Podgorica agreement with the Albanians, with Italy declaring war on the Ottoman Empire on 29th of September and attacking Tripoli on the occasion. In these circumstances, the Young Turk government will be forced to change its behavior towards Albanians and even show to be “compliant”, returning the order for the reopening of Albanian schools, closed a year before and the introduction of the Albanian language in primary and secondary schools. It also pledged to fund all Albanian schools. The work of some banned Albanian newspapers and Albanian cultural clubs was similarly allowed. Many political prisoners would be released from prisons, while many of the leaders of the Kosovo armed resistance held a year before returned from long internments. Although the governor of Shkodra had not fulfilled many of the commitments made by the points of the Podgorica agreement, especially the ones related to the compensations for the demolished houses and the destroyed properties, nevertheless with the reopening of schools and newspapers, “the spirit of reconciliation ” began to be felt, even though Albanians had already lost faith on the Young Turks and their anti-Albanian policy.

However, the war with Italy and other difficulties in different parts of the country due to the harsh nationalist-centralist course of the Young Turks, followed with great dissatisfaction everywhere, will create opportunities for a new opposition alliance. Thus, in November 1911, an opposition party known as the “*Freedom and Understanding*” (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Firkası*) was founded, containing an important point in its program of decentralization of the entire administration and the recognition of constitutional rights for all national provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Albanians played an active role in the party.

Hasan Prishtina was one of its eleven founders. Basri from Dibra and Mit'hat Frashëri also joined the party. This party entered into an agreement with the leadership of the Albanian National Movement and in December 1911 began to exert a decisive impact on the Turkish Chamber. Realizing they were facing a general effort against Ottoman policy and its centralism, the spirit of which had already involved not only Albanians but also others, who being united in parliament could achieve success, especially if the Ottoman Empire would face other wars, such as that of Tripoli with Italy, the Young Turks then decided to use an extreme measure to dissolve parliament on January 18, 1912, in order to secure an absolute majority in the next election, which would be thwarting demands for decentralization coming from Albanians and others.¹⁴³⁰

THE KOSOVO UPRISING OF 1912 AND THE SHKUP AGREEMENT WITH THE OTTOMANS

The dissolution of the Ottoman Parliament by the Young Turks at a time when the Ottoman Empire was facing internal crises - among which the Albanian one was the most severe - as well as external ones - war with Italy, ending with the loss of Tripoli, was calculated by them to bring to the parliament an absolute majority of the Committee “Unity and Progress” so that a “strong hand” government would have the support and “full legitimacy” of Parliament, which was important for the circumstances and the way which the Young Turks had defined.

Hasan Prishtina, together with other Albanian MPs, warned about the dangers of this scenario with serious consequences for the Ottoman Empire itself and its stability, in the last session of the Ottoman Parliament, on January 11, 1912, just one week before the parliament dissolved.

¹⁴³⁰ See the report of diplomat Kral to Aehrenthal, Thessaloniki, 5 January 1912, no. 6 (secret document), HHSStA, PA XIV/33, Albanien XXXIV.

Hasan Prishtina's speech on the threat facing the country "*if the Government does not change its policy and administration in Albania, if the Albanians do not enjoy their political rights*",¹⁴³¹ " is well known, then "*the country will revolt and a revolution will break out. And one of the first to take up the flag of the revolution, maybe the first of the first will be I.*"¹⁴³²

As expected, the Young Turks did not heed the words of Hasan Prishtina and others Albanian parliamentarians. What mattered to them was complete victory in the snap elections, thinking that the internal "unity" was so necessarily needed to face the many and serious challenges, which were even more severe than those facing Hamidian despotism and its rule. As for relations with the Great Powers, especially with Germany and Austria-Hungary, although they appealed to Western concepts and propagated constitutional parliamentarism and the secular state, as soon as they came to power they lost all friends thanks to the slogan "the whole world was against the Ottoman Empire". Even its current supporters, Austria-Hungary, with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the approval of Bulgaria to declare independence and indifferent behavior towards Crete to join Greece, turned against them.

In these circumstances, that is, to remain without outside friends and by creating internal enemies with the Albanians, who had the greatest merits for bringing them to power, however, the "*Union and Progress*" Committee, aware of the true power of Albanians, tried to include in its ranks some of the "moderate" Albanian representatives, mainly Ottomans in terms of convictions, who competed against the candidates of the leaders of the Albanian National Movement, supported by local committees and the administration of the country, including the militant circles from the ranks of the Ottoman army influenced by the Young Turks.

In this fierce campaign, with the exception of Hasan Prishtina, who won thanks to the great authority he enjoyed in the Vilayet of Kosova, though will not enter parliament, most Albanian national leaders lost the race. In fact, this did not work for Ismail Qemali in his hometown either, as he was defeated by the governor of Janina, Mehmed Avni, who had the support of the Young Turks. On April 18, when the Ottoman parliament convened, the victory of the Young Turk majority was 215 out of 222 seats!

Evidently, this violent victory will stick in the Young Turks' throat, because the parliamentary farce and the manipulation of the constitution to the extreme forced the Albanians to join the ranks turning to a general uprising to put an end to the Young Turk rule. If the Young Turks, four years ago, had come to power with the direct help of the Albanians and their uprising that had forced Sultan Hamid to restore the Constitution of 1876 and parliamentarism, it would be the same Albanians who with an action of similarly, forced the Young Turk government to step down. Therefore, a great uprising was deemed necessary, comprehensive and directed by a center, starting forth a development which was to be historic.

The decision for a general uprising was taken in Istanbul, at a meeting held on 12 January 1912 at the Taksim neighborhood, in the European part. Previously, Hasan Prishtina, who had threatened the Ottoman Parliament with a major uprising if the Young Turks would continue their anti-Albanian policy, and Ismail Qemali, who also agreed with him, had taken necessary steps during several meetings after the dissolution of the Ottoman parliament and especially on the response to be issued to the Balkan League (consisting of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece), which had agreed to a joint war against the Ottoman Empire as soon as they received the signal from Russia. The two most important leaders of the Albanian National Movement had previously created a concept as foundation for their decisions, which was to be based on two basic requirements:

- administrative autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, and
- determining that Albanians were recognized as a nation.

¹⁴³¹ Prishtina, Hasan: "*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh mbi kryengritjen shqiptare të vjetit 1912*" ("*A summary of memories on the Albanian uprising of 1912*"), Second Edition, Bari, 1925, p. 7.

¹⁴³² Idem, p. 7.

There was also the position that the Albanian uprising did not demand the fall down of the Ottoman Empire, though it did not defend the centralist path of the Ottomans either.

Thus, on this platform, which was in line with the national program, this meeting had to be held, which in fact presented more of an agreement on the division of tasks of each separately and the responsibility of the group as a whole. Participants had to take on tasks and responsibilities, which had to be implemented.

The meeting was held at the house of Syrja bej Vlora. In addition to Ismail Qemali and Hasan Prishtina, Syrja bej Vlora, Myfit bej Libohova, Esad Pasha Toptani and Aziz Vrioni also participated in the meeting. The meeting was also attended by Bedri Pejani, who kept the minutes, as well as Mustafa Aziz Kruja. The meeting was chaired by Ismail Qemali, while the demand platform and the program were presented by Hasan Prishtina. After full consent on the platform and other issues related to each individual's duties, the participants swore "*to put an end to Turkish politics on issues of national culture and to provide some political privileges for Albania there were no other means except to begin with a general uprising.*"¹⁴³³

The "Taksim Agreement" provided Kosovo with a crucial role in the general uprising. It would be followed by other Albanian areas in accordance with the tasks taken in the Meeting.

Thus, Hasan Prishtina undertook leading the uprising in Kosovo. Ismail Qemali was tasked with going to Europe and, in addition to talks with important politicians and diplomats of the Great Powers, purchasing 15,000 rifles and providing 10,000 gold napoleons for the uprising. Esad Pasha Toptani undertook organizing an uprising in Central Albania and in the Vilayet of Shkodra. While Myfit bej Libohova, Aziz Vrioni and Syrja bej Vlora were tasked with organizing uprisings in the Vilayets of Manastir and Janina. As will be seen, only Hasan Prishtina performed the tasks taken over at Taksim.¹⁴³⁴

However, the Taksim Agreement required urgent action from within and without. Ismail Qemali and Hasan Prishtina, two of the founders of the Albanian National Movement, began talks with diplomatic representatives of the Great Powers accredited in Istanbul and with representatives of neighboring countries, regardless of the fact that the mutual alliances of the Balkan countries for one had already been established for a joint war against the Ottoman Empire.

The attitude of the Albanians towards such an alliance was of great importance, as it also belonged to their future, especially considering that the neighboring countries linked the war against European Turkey with the occupation of Albanian territories, which in their hegemonic programs had long been turned into national priorities and were already on their maps: Kosovo as "*Old Serbia*", the Vilayet of Manastir as Bulgarian Macedonia, and Janina within "*Vorio Epirus*".

Ismail Qemali's first conversation with the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Istanbul, Pallavicini, was about this concern. On this occasion, Ismail Qemali tried to find out what position Vienna would take if the Albanians reached an agreement on their autonomy, while as warned by them, this would serve as a trigger for the Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) to go to war with the Ottoman Empire to prevent this. The Ambassador of Vienna was informed about the determination of the Albanians for an integral state on the occasion of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴³⁵

Although the information that the Viennese ambassador in Istanbul forwarded to the foreign minister of the double monarchy does not refer to the answer given to Ismail Qemali, except that it states that "he was informed of our position on maintaining the *status quo*,

¹⁴³³ Idem, p. 10.

¹⁴³⁴ Cana, Zekeria: "*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*", Prishtinë 1979, p. 203.

¹⁴³⁵ See report by Palavicini addressed to the Foreign Minister Ahrenthal from Istanbul rated "top secret" from HHStA, PA XIV/9, Albanien V/6.

however, Ismail Qemali expressed the same concern a little later to the Ambassador of Austria-Hungary in Paris, Szecsen during the tour he had in the capitals of the Great Powers.¹⁴³⁶

During the conversation with the Ambassador of Vienna in Paris, the focus was on the demand that Austria-Hungary should come to their aid in those very critical circumstances, especially to prevent neighboring countries against their open claims to expand to Albanian lands, ostensibly on their “right” to liberate “their remaining parts under the occupation of the Ottoman Empire”. On the occasion, I. Qemali informed the Austro-Hungarian ambassador that for Albanians the double monarchy was the only country of protection. I. Qemali also informed the Austro-Hungarian ambassador about the plans of the Albanians and what they wanted to achieve with the general uprising, which they had planned for the spring. The summary was as follows:

*“We do not demand the overthrowing of the Ottoman Empire, but we demand that it rather remain strong enough to maintain this power by restoring the trust of its citizens, fulfilling their demands. For Albanians, this means gaining administrative autonomy and being granted the right to be recognized as an equal nation with others.”*¹⁴³⁷

The Viennese ambassador to Paris appeared very cautious, but he nevertheless hinted that Vienna would not allow the expansion of Serbia or Montenegro to the detriment of Albanian lands. He made it known that Vienna had already, through diplomatic channels, officially warned Belgrade not to take action against the Albanian territories. He also spoke of contacts with Russia to prevent its allies in the Balkans from jeopardizing peace.¹⁴³⁸

Hasan Prishtina received similar answers from Vienna diplomats from a meeting with the Austro-Hungarian Consul General in Thessaloniki about the concerns of Albanians about the threat of occupation of their lands by Slavic and Greek neighbors, who were in the final stages of preparations to enter war with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴³⁹

In these circumstances, as the Balkan crisis was escalating and war was almost inevitable, Albanians as a whole were focused on Austria-Hungary and its behavior, no matter how hard it tried to animate its attitudes towards Albanians and no matter what interests they were associated with. Importantly, the Double Monarchy was seen by Albanians of all walks of life, even by desperate fanatics and Ottomans for annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina four years before, as the only protector because protecting Albania from Slavic occupation was closely linked to the role that the Albanians had to play in the new circumstances after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and, regardless of the status it would have (foreign-supervised autonomy, international protectorate or any other form), would serve as a deterrent to Slavic-Orthodox hegemony led by Russia, which was also in the interest of Europe.

This view was clearly expressed at the Congress of Berlin 1878 by England, when Lord Beaconsfield, during the sixth session, the Russian request for the lands to be given to Serbia and Montenegro, opposed the inclusion of non-Slavic peoples (meaning Albanians) under their rule on the grounds that “Slavs appeared oppressive and uncivilized”. This attitude will be clarified a little later by Solsbury, when he said it meant that the preservation of the ethnic Albanian whole would serve as protection against them.¹⁴⁴⁰

In fact, Germany agreed on this issue with a small difference, and in a way, Italy also agreed, which could accept the request for any kind of Albania, provided that it was not under the full influence of Vienna.

For the Albanians, who were increasingly opening a gap with the Young Turks and increasingly at risk of being swallowed by Slavic and Greek neighbors, it hardly mattered on

¹⁴³⁶ Idem.

¹⁴³⁷ See letter of ambassador Szecsen addressed from Paris to Aehrenthal no. 38-D, HHStA, PA XIV, Albanien, V/6.

¹⁴³⁸ See Vlora, Ismail Qemal: “*Kujtime*”, Tiranë, 1997, pp. 249-251; Buxhovi, Jusuf; “*Kithesa historike 3*”, Prishtinë, 2010, p. 188.

¹⁴³⁹ Idem, faqe 188.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008, Protocol VI, p. 147.

what grounds Albania and its existence were projected from outside. The main thing was that it was meant to be and supported, since only in this way could the support for the Albanian state be provided, which had to be declared before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Some of the demands that Austria-Hungary will address from different parts of Albania and Albanians were of the same nature, with some being, in the name of protection from the Slavs, demanded an a priori annexation of Albania. Such was the case that Ndre Mjeda and Don Luigj Bumçi would address Vienna. Catholic clerics appealed to the Crown Prince, Franz Ferdinand, on the grounds that Albanians were powerless against Slavic and at the same time in defenseless circumstances. A little later, a similar request, but with an emphasis that it be of a military nature, will be sent to Vienna by Zef Seregji, Archbishop of Shkodra.¹⁴⁴¹

It seems that Vienna, despite its obligations to the Tripartite Alliance, especially Italy, with which there had been many talks recently on the issue of Albania, should be brought in if the *status quo* was unilaterally destroyed by the foreign factors (thought to be the neighbors of the Albanians), had not ruled out unilateral military intervention in northern Albania. It would take place under the pretext of the obligations imposed on Vienna by the agreements with the Ottoman Empire from 1652, where Austria-Hungary appeared as an “authorized” protector of the Catholic faithful in the Balkans, from which the well-known “*Kultursprotektorat*” project would later emerge. In this case Austria-Hungary was allowed the right to intervene in Albania in defense of the Albanians of the Catholic faith. This is best seen in a credible report sent to the Emperor by the Chief of Staff of the Empire’s Army, Schemus, who suggested that if the Ottoman Empire lost the war, Kosovo should be occupied immediately, so as to secure ties with Albania of the north, which he considered “unconditionally” within the Austrian sphere of influence.¹⁴⁴²

Even Ismail Qemali, as the most important personality of what could be taken by the Albanian diplomacy of the crisis, always keeping in mind that the Slavic plunder could not be resisted otherwise than by being taken under protection by a powerful European ally, who was able to use force for such purposes - after finally being detached from the illusion that it was Italy that could help the Albanians - it would not rule out Austro-Hungarian military intervention in Albania to turn it into a temporary protectorate. Szecsen presented these options to the Viennese ambassador in Paris, ensuring that the Albanians did not in any way anticipate special ties with Italy, nor were there any plans for anything similar.¹⁴⁴³

Ismail Qemali’s stances on the Austro-Hungarian intervention in the Albanian issue, in the circumstances when everything was heading towards an inevitable war between the Balkan states, allies of Russia (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) against the Ottoman Empire, which had already formed mutual alliances or were on their way to sign them, for Vienna it had a meaning, because they came from the man who constantly, openly or secretly, as a diplomat of the Ottoman Empire and as its politician, had cultivated, but also suggested relations to the detriment of Austria-Hungary and Germany and to the benefit of Great Britain or France. Ismail Qemali, therefore, for Vienna was more than an opponent, who, however, was inevitable as the leader of the Albanian National Movement, which for Austria-Hungary and its interests in the European part of the Ottoman Empire had a special meaning, as through or with it the spheres of interest were connected which it already intended and was on the way to balancing with Russia.

However, Ismail Qemali, after the well-known quarrels with Greece and Italy and some very biased agreements with Athens, which were also criticized by many Albanian patriots (Konica and others who were determined for Austria-Hungary and Germany as defenders of Albanians), this time was obliged to talk to the Austro-Hungarian diplomat as a man seeking salvation and not as a diplomat or politician able to ask, but also to give. Vienna already knew this, which would treat Ismail Qemali from that moment on, imposing on him many of his

¹⁴⁴¹ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kithesa historike 3*”, Prishtinë, 2010, p. 190.

¹⁴⁴² See: “*Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik 1908-1912*”, Wien, 1917.

¹⁴⁴³ Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 402.

actions, which were already coordinated in favor of making Albania an independent state, regardless of to what extent it would be.

Hasan Prishtina was also seeking support from Vienna, personally taking over the leadership of the next Albanian uprising so that it would be interconnected, coordinated and without internal contradictions, as had happened in the case of the 1910 Kosovo uprising and that of the Northern Highlands of 1911. During a conversation with the Austro-Hungarian consul in Thessaloniki, Kral, Hasan Prishtina announced that all possible connections with the Young Turks had already been severed because their pan-Turkism was destructive and it offered no opportunity to meet the demands of the Albanians. So he anticipated a general revolt in Albania. The sense of national identity, Hasan Prishtina will point out, had made significant progress in northern Kosovo, and Kosovar leaders were working tirelessly to reach an agreement with other parts of Albania on a major uprising. On this occasion, Hasan Prishtina reiterated the already known position on the need to create an Albanian state within a strong Turkish state, but Albanians doubted that possibility, because *“on the one hand, Turkey was not able to stand on its own two feet for a long time, because it was disintegrating, on the other hand, it turned a blind eye to the reasonable demands of the Albanians and did not want to allow them to be prepared for any case.”*¹⁴⁴⁴

In addition to trying to secure the support of a powerful ally such as Austria-Hungary - which had already focused Albanians and their ethnic space on the circle of its sphere of interest and with these claims it will support and protect the independence of Albania - Ismail Qemali and Hasan Prishtina turned their attention to the Balkan countries, regardless of their known attitudes.

Hasan Prishtina tried to secure cooperation with the Bulgarian-Macedonian movement in Eastern Albania.¹⁴⁴⁵

To this end, there was a meeting with the former member of the Shkupi former deputy to the Ottoman Parliament, Pavlov, to whom a proposal was made for a joint uprising, without excluding the possibility of creating an autonomous Albanian-Macedonian state.¹⁴⁴⁶

Pavlov, after consulting with the center of the Bulgarian-Macedonian movement (with the Verkhovna Rada) in Sofia, replied that *“Bulgarians could never take part in the uprising”*.¹⁴⁴⁷

This was also to be expected, as Sofia, which was already linked to its neighbors within the Balkan Alliance, had plans to invade some of the Albanian lands.

Unlike Sofia, Belgrade, which had been well informed about the stance of Albanians to launch an armed uprising against the Young Turk government in the spring showed an interest on it.

However, Serbia, which initially excluded from any conversation or agreement Ismail Qemali, Hasan Prishtina and the rest of the intellectuals from the ranks of the Albanian National Movement, who had participated in Ottoman parliamentarism and the Young Turk movement, linked their movement to political demands such as that of Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and any other forms. Belgrade was looking for interlocutors among the local leaders, feudal lords, bayraktars and part of the chieftains, which remained supporters of Sultan Hamid hoping that one of the aims of the insurgency's pressure on the Young Turk government was to return him to power. For more, Serbia had been working in this direction and it can be said it had borne fruit, as it had entered into relations with some of the leaders of Kosovo, whom it had supported during the uprising of 1910, with some of them having been given asylum in Serbia after they had been defeated by the Ottoman military campaign of Turgut Pasha. In line with this position, Belgrade again entered into talks with Isa Boletini, Hasan Hysen Budakova,

¹⁴⁴⁴ See letter from Kral addressed to Aehrenthal, Thessaloniki, 5 January 1912, no. 6. Secret. HHStA, PA XIV/33, Albanien XXXIV.

¹⁴⁴⁵ *“Historia e popullit shqiptar”*, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 463.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Idem, p. 464.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Idem, p. 464.

Iliaz Agushi, Mahmut Zajmi, Bajram Daklani, Sadik Rama of Gjurgjevik, Ramadan Shabani, and others.¹⁴⁴⁸

Some of them had gone to Belgrade, where they were received by Foreign Minister Milovanović and Nikola Pašić. It is known that Foreign Minister Milovanović had promised them that the Serbian government had authorized their consul in Prishtina, Milojevic, where they would receive aid (weapons, as well as money), but that the aid was conditional on giving up *any intention of an administrative autonomy for Albania*.¹⁴⁴⁹

Serbia also conditioned the start of the uprising, which was to come out of an agreement with the Serbian authorities.

Belgrade, however, promised to supply weapons and other material means, as well as to allow weapons to pass to Albania through Serbia through smuggling, which, on the eve of the outbreak of the uprising, took on great proportions.¹⁴⁵⁰

Sofia's refusal to cooperate with the Albanian uprising and the conditioned support by Belgrade will not stop the flow that was foreseen in accordance with the Taksim Agreement. New voting for the Ottoman parliament under pressure from the Young Turks, where most Albanian leaders lost, then the non-fulfillment of many of the promises given to northern Albanians after the suppression of their uprising as soon as they agreed to return from asylum in Montenegro as well as other weaknesses of the Young Turk government, created a suitable climate to the benefit of an Albanian uprising. Realizing it was inevitable, the Young Turk authorities, on the eve and during the elections, made efforts to issue signs of reconciliation through some concessions (reopening of some Albanian schools and the beginning of construction of some roads in the North), though without giving up on Ottoman centralism and nationalism.

To this end, the Young Turk government set up a government commission headed by Interior Minister Hacı Adil Bey, who came to Albania and talked to the local leadership and the people about cooperation so that governance was in line with the needs and the interests of Albanians. The government commission, dubbed the Reform Commission, headed by Interior Minister Hacı Adil Bey, not coincidentally began its visit in Kosovo, knowing that preparations for a new uprising had already begun there. He had the opportunity to investigate this in Prishtina, as the high level Ottoman government delegation was received coldly, while on the way to Peja and Gjakova, near Strelc, it was attacked by insurgent forces led by Mahmut Zajmi of Peja. It will be met similarly in other parts of Central and Southern Albania, as far as Manastir and Janina, as it was clear during the visit that the Minister of Interior had paid a good part of his attention to the manipulation of the polling stations aiming at the deepest possible victory of the candidates of the "*Union and Progress*" Committee in the Albanian areas, which will happen, adding to more suitable circumstances for the beginning of the uprising.¹⁴⁵¹

The ineffective departure of the government commission headed by Interior Minister Hacı Adil Bey and the announcement of an almost absolute victory of the Young Turk candidates in all Albanian centers, eliminating most of the Albanian leaders, paved the way for the start of the uprising in Kosovo, which in accordance with the Taksim Agreement had to include, without exception, the whole of Albania.

Hasan Prishtina had finally left Istanbul and, in accordance with the promise he had made at the last meeting of the Ottoman parliament on January 11, 1912, that if the anti-Albanian policy of the Young Turk government continued, "*the parliament's seat would be replaced by Kosovo's mountains*" he will be at the forefront of the work for the uprising in Albania to begin as planned and to take the right direction to become a pivot of an all-Albanian movement.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Idem, p. 465.

¹⁴⁴⁹ See Cana, Zekeria: "*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*", Prishtinë 1979, p. 208.

¹⁴⁵⁰ "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", II, Tiranë, 2002, p. 465.

¹⁴⁵¹ See Cana, Zekeria: "*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*", Prishtinë, pp. 214-218.

Hasan Prishtina's departure from Istanbul and his return to Kosovo was a result of a decision that the "Central Committee of the Uprising" had taken in April 1912, after the opening session of the new parliament, to start the general uprising in Albania, the center of which would be Kosovo.¹⁴⁵²

In accordance with this decision, Hasan Prishtina moved to Kosovo. The first connections with some of the local leaders and feudal lords, who had long been at war with the Young Turk government, were taken by H. Prishtina in Shkup and Prishtina. Then he started to get in touch with the leaders of the insurgent groups operating in the area between Gjakova and Peja, led by Muhmut Zajmi, Zefi i Vogël, Ali Binaku, Qerim Binaku, Bajram Mani, Zog Avdyli, Bajram Daklani, and others. These squads, which during the visit of the Minister of Interior, Hacı Adil Bey, had testified their fighting abilities, had to be connected to a common center in order to interact.

From Dukagjini Hasan Prishtina moved to Drenica, where he was supported by Ahmet Delia in Prekaz and Sadik Ramë Gjurgjeviku on the outskirts of Peja. There, after a while, Hasan Prishtina was joined by Isa Boletini and some comrades. This was reasonable, since Isa Boletini's hostility to the Young Turks had made him distrustful of some Albanian leaders (members of the first parliament) who had supported the Young Turk movement and had brought the Albanians to power in Ferizaj four years before, those who, as will be seen, will be the first to turn their backs on Albanians and their demands. In those circumstances, Isa Boletini had an interest not only in overthrowing the Young Turk government, but also in restoring Sultan Hamid. This attitude will have consequences on the occasion of the Shkup Memorandum and opened the dilemma of interdependence or connection of leaders from Kosovo with different interests, who were committed to leading the Albanian movement in accordance with their interests from abroad, usually well disguised "by fraternal support" and similar slogans, which worked with easy believing Albanians.¹⁴⁵³

Despite what Isa Boletini had in mind, his emergence on the side of the uprising was important because he was an important authority in the northern part of Kosovo. Nexhip Draga had also managed to win over the province of Shala, so that it could join the uprising. An assembly was held there with the leaders of that area, where *besa* (pledge) was sworn. Draga, however, will not personally join the uprising on "health" grounds, but will use every opportunity for the uprising to succeed. However, the reasons why he did not physically join the uprising are related to some accounts he had with Isa Boletini about the properties in the north of Mitrovica, which the Young Turk government had taken from Isa and given to Draga as forest concessions, where he had built a steam saw and a forest cutting enterprise. Knowing the importance of one and the other, Hasan Prishtina did his best to use Isa Boletini's military power and Draga's diplomatic-political power for the needs of the Uprising. So even without Nexhip Draga present, he will put his name on all other calls and information for the public, as a way of keeping an important person connected to the National Movement.¹⁴⁵⁴

After agreeing on the course of action and the liaison with a command center, in early May the Dukagjin detachments, led by Mahmut Zajmi and Zefi i Vogël, attacked the Ottoman forces in the vicinity of Peja inflicting heavy losses. These actions made it difficult for the Ottoman military forces to move towards Mitrovica, where the fighting had also commenced.¹⁴⁵⁵

Faced with such attacks, foreshadowing a large-scale uprising, the Sublime Porte continued to concentrate new military forces in Kosovo. From the end of May in Ferizaj a division of Nizams from Istanbul arrived, specialized in performing special tasks and equipped with modern weapons and means. The Ottoman military forces, commanded by the Commander of the 7th Shkup Corps, General Ismail Fadil Pasha, were getting ready, though it seemed that

¹⁴⁵² See I.G. Senkevich: "Osvoditel'noe dvizhenie albanskogo naroda v 1905-1912", Moskë, 1959, p. 217.

¹⁴⁵³ Cana, Zekeria: "Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912", Prishtinë 1979, pp. 220-221.

¹⁴⁵⁴ For more on Nexhip Draga and his role in the 1912 uprising see: Prishtina, Hasan: "Nji shkurtime kujtimesh", Bari, 1925.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Cana, Zekeria: "Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912", Prishtinë 1979, p. 221.

the Young Turk government was initially uninterested in a punitive campaign similar to that of Shevket Dervish Turgut Pasha.¹⁴⁵⁶

The first military successes of the insurgents in different parts of Kosovo posed an urgent task of coordinating and organizing the uprising on a national scale with political demands and programs. Hasan Prishtina's return to Kosovo together with other activists had created good circumstances for the Kosovo Uprising to turn into a torch of the National Movement in accordance with the Taksim Agreement. During the first meetings with local chiefs and gang leaders, Hasan Prishtina demanded that the Uprising be motivated by the demand for "*Administrative Freedom of Albania*", i.e. autonomy. The request was signed by Mahmut Zajmi, Bajram Daklani, Zefi i Vogël, Pjetër Çeli, Halil Mehmedi, Idriz Jaha, Hasan Bllaca, and Sali Hoxhë Elbasani.¹⁴⁵⁷

This and the successes shown in expanding the insurgent movement raised the need to unite all forces around a national political program. Thus, at the initiative of Hasan Prishtina, it was decided to convene a national assembly in Junik. In advance, he will hold numerous meetings with some of Kosovo's leaders, who had different ambitions often subject to turning national interests to personal ones, entering into unilateral relations with Belgrade, Cetina or the other centers interested on the Albanian movement not having a center of leadership nor internal unity, but to rather remain prey to external influences, as had happened two years before.

The Assembly convened in Junik on May 21-25, 1912. It was attended by 250 delegates from the Vilayet of Kosova, as well as from the Sanjaks of Dibra, Shkodra and Elbasan. There were also some representatives of the southern provinces, although this cannot be documented by the incomplete or accompanying notes.¹⁴⁵⁸

In the Junik Assembly, attended by Hasan Prishtina, Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri, Riza Kryeziu, Nexhip Draga, Sefer Neziri - Kleçka and others, the agreement for the uprising was reached on the basis of the fight against the "*Union and Progress*" Committee and in general the government of the Young Turks and here was the key to the unification of all Albanians, especially the feudal forces, which had many reasons to take revenge on the Young Turks for the campaign they had undertaken against them a year ago. A *Besa* was also pledged for this.¹⁴⁵⁹

Before *Besa* was reached to fight the Young Turk Committee and their rule a strong confrontation with the Turkoman current took place, displayed at the Assembly with the latter disagreeing to declaring war on the Young Turk government, because it harmed the Ottoman Empire and thus the interests of the Albanians. The Mutasarrif of Peja had sent a "peace" mission to the Assembly, demanding that the Albanians and the Young Turk government talk instead of fighting and resolve their differences by agreement. But, eventually, the autonomist current was stronger and won. On the occasion, the Assembly approved the political program which set out the following demands:

- *Recognition of Albania's autonomy;*
- *Establishment of an Albanian administration;*
- *Appointment of the Albanian language with the national alphabet as an official language;*
- *Raising the Albanian flag throughout the country;*
- *Appointing an offspring from Albanian "princely" families as general governor and Guaranteeing the Great Powers to meet these demands.*¹⁴⁶⁰

These decisions were handed over to the Istanbul government and distributed to the assemblies and committees of other parts of Albania, which were also supported.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Gawrych, George: "*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*", Tiranë, 2007, p. 293.

¹⁴⁵⁷ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 470.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Idem, p. 470.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Cana, Zekeria: "*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*", Prishtinë 1979, pp. 230-233.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Idem, p. 471.

Hasan Prishtina and other patriots set to work to implement the decisions of the Junik Assembly.

He issued a proclamation to “*freedom-loving Albanians and the civilized world*” in which the struggle for Albanian autonomy was presented as a struggle against oppression, repression and anti-Albanian administration of the Young Turks and invited all lovers of welfare and freedom in the Empire to support the Albanian war, because “*the homeland expects unity from us. Today and on this day the minutes are approaching to get rid of all evils of the Young Turks.*”

The article ended with the following call:

“*Salvation or Death!*”¹⁴⁶¹

As the Ottoman government would not respond to the demands of the Junik Assembly, it was natural for the insurgents to take action. From mid-May, the insurgents operating in the Dukagjin Plain, led by Hasan Prishtina and Bajram Curri, were the first to start the war.¹⁴⁶²

Fighting then spread to Peja, with forces led by Isa Boletini, Bajram Daklani, Sadik Rama, Mahmut Zajmi, and Zefi i Vogel attacking Peja on May 31, destroying military positions and gendarmerie posts in its surroundings. On June 6, the insurgents entered Peja, but did not stay long, as Ottoman forces would be assisted by the 19th Division of Nizams from Mitrovica, so they had to retreat in the direction of Gucia, where they concentrated during further operations in that part.¹⁴⁶³

The insurgents continued to attack Ottoman forces in other areas in the direction of Qafa e Prushit and Përdrini. The forces led by Bajram Curri successfully operated in Has, Gash, and Bytyç managing to break the government forces in Qafë e Prushit, leaving the Albanians with ammunition, weapons, machine guns and cannons, which were used to arm the insurgents. They left about 300 dead and many wounded of the enemy forces during the fighting. For the first time, rebel forces captured prisoners of war.¹⁴⁶⁴

From the first days, the uprising of Gjakova and Peja was supported by the Albanian population of the Catholic faith of Mërtur and Nikaj. Mirdita quickly joined them. The efforts of the Ottomans to use religious differences and bring Mirdita between the Muslims of Shkodra and Kruja did not succeed.¹⁴⁶⁵

Evidently, Kruja and Tirana, which were preparing for the uprising, joined the insurgents of Mirdita and Zadrime at the end of June. The uprising also found support in the population of Shkodra, which formed an insurgent committee. Thus, the movement against the Young Turks occupied not only the Catholic cities, long known for their hostility to the government, but also the Muslim cities. The uprising now intensified in Dibra and the Albanian provinces on its southwest.¹⁴⁶⁶

Even in the southern provinces, where Albanian beys did not take kindly to the Young Turk government, especially the “*Union and Progress*” Committee, the spirit of the uprising that had begun in Kosova began to open up and support it. The Bucharest Colony had sent Pandeli Cala from Korça as its representative in Southern Albania to exert influence on Orthodox Christians to join the Muslim Albanians in the uprising that had begun in Kosova and was expanding day by day.¹⁴⁶⁷

The success of the Kosovo uprising, and its expansion into northern and southern Albania, led opposition circles within the Ottoman army to express their dissatisfaction with the Young Turk government, which instead of focusing on the war against the Italians in Tripoli it increased its armed forces in Kosovo and other Albanian areas by opening up internal fronts with great

¹⁴⁶¹ Prishtina, Hasan: “*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh*”, Bari, 1925, p. 28.

¹⁴⁶² “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 472.

¹⁴⁶³ Zana, Zekeria: “*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*”, Prishtinë 1979, p. 234.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Idem.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 384.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Idem, p. 384.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Report of Council Kral addressed to Bertchold, Thessaloniki, 23 June 1912, no. 102 (secret), HHStA, PA XIV/39, Albanien XXXIV.

dangers to the Empire, especially realizing that the Balkan Alliance between Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece had already been linked in forms and directions waiting for the right moment for a war against the Ottoman Empire.

Thus, by the end of May, a group of officers, mostly Turks, formed a secret society in Istanbul, called the “Group of Salvation Officers” (*Halaskar Zabitan Gurubu*). They called for an end to the despotism of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee and intrusion of the Young Turks in the army, and drew up a political program for this purpose.¹⁴⁶⁸

Albanians contacted opposition officers as well as the opposition party *Hürriet ve ittilaf* (*Freedom and Agreement*). Successful communication was especially held with the military opposition, as most Albanian officers and soldiers in Rumelia already belonged to the “*Group of Salvation Officers*” and were waiting for an opportunity to settle accounts with the anti-Albanian attitude of the Young Turks. Thus, on June 21, 1912, a group of officers and soldiers (8 officers and 140 soldiers) of the first battalion of the 49th Infantry Regiment, led by an Albanian officer Tajar Tetova, known for their great contribution to the victory of the Young Turk Revolution (1908), left the camp near Manastir and took to the mountains. Along with Tajar Tetova, other Albanian officers also moved to the mountains: Xhelal Preveza, Kasem Kolonja, Melek Kolonja (Frashëri) and Ahmet Bejtaga (Kavaja). Later, whole units joined the uprising, such as the battalion commanded by Major Xhenabi Adil Gjakova.¹⁴⁶⁹

The desertion of Albanian and Turkish soldiers from the Ottoman military formations continued in other parts as well. Officers Ismail Haki Devaja, Ismail Haki Libohova and Ibrahim Gjakova also joined the rebel committee led by Dan Cami in Dibra.¹⁴⁷⁰

The fugitive officers issued a statement on June 21 announcing the reasons for the breaking away. The Young Turk regime was said to be destroying the Empire and the constitutional order with a government that had brought about a policy of injustice and terror that had been practiced in Albania for years. The proclamation further stated that they had fled to show solidarity with their Albanian compatriots, who had risen to show their patriotism and patriotic self-sacrifice against all those who have brought all those evil things to the country.¹⁴⁷¹

The military demanded an immediate resignation of the government, dissolution of parliament and decreeing of new elections, and sending to court of the highest governmental, military and political figures of Young Turk, such as Ibrahim Haki, Mehmed Shevket, Said and Rifat Pasha, Talat and Javid Bey, as well as the Chief of General Staff. They pledged they would not lay down their arms without these demands being met.¹⁴⁷²

Opposition officers held debates about what attitude should be taken towards the political demands of the Albanians, especially the autonomy that had been established at the “Junik Assembly” constituting the core of the Albanian political program.

Albanian officers, in addition to overthrowing the government, in the new parliamentary elections, demanded that the military opposition support the Albanians’ demand for political autonomy, as it was also in the best interest of the country. Most of the Turkish military remained loyal to the *Itilafe* spirit, that is, to the demand for a change of government “from evil”, as the Young Turk one was called, to “good”, which had to come out of the new elections, though without changing the Ottoman spirit.

Despite these differences, there was no confrontation between the “*Salvation Officers Group*”. Because both the Turkish and military opposition were interested on the power of the Albanians and sought to take advantage of the Albanian uprising and its ever-increasing size to overthrow the Young Turks, which had come through the help of Albanians.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 294.

¹⁴⁶⁹ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 474.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Idem, p. 474.

¹⁴⁷¹ Idem, p. 474.

¹⁴⁷² Idem, p. 474.

This impasse was not overlooked by the Albanians themselves, concerning them as much as possible as the uprising grew and gained wide reach. Although the Junik Assembly decided on political demands related to the autonomy of Albanians within the Ottoman Empire, external developments, especially the Alliance of Balkan Countries against the Ottoman Empire, and the threat that Albanian lands would still be fragmented by their neighbors pushed the leaders of the uprising harmonize some of their positions with those of the opposition and the military, temporarily withdrawing from the platform adopted by the Junik Assembly.

At the end of June, they published in the newspaper “*Ikdam*” a statement signed among others by Hasan Prishtina, Isa Boletini, Riza Gjakova, Jahja Prizreni and others, formulated in the spirit of the demands of the opposition. After emphasizing their ties to the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphate, they declared that they had risen to defend the “true constitution”, being the common goal of all the opposition forces of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁴⁷³

The statement by the leaders of the Kosovo uprising also said that Albanians were forced to turn to weapons because of the country’s need for certain laws, in accordance with special conditions. These laws also meant the fulfillment of national rights. However, neither they nor the demands of Albanian autonomy were mentioned in the statement.¹⁴⁷⁴

The “tactical” withdrawal from the demand on autonomy will further unite the Albanian insurgents with the Ottoman opposition, as well as with the movement of the army in the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir around the same goal: overthrow of the government. Thus, the military factor not only came into play, as it did during the 1908 revolution, but it gained more and more weight, because in addition to the desertion it waged on the war fronts with the Albanians, weakening the chances of a campaign against them, as it happened in the first year of Turgut Pasha, the army exerted direct pressure on the Young Turk government to leave and give way to new elections, even though the newly-elected parliament had just been constituted. Thus, the officers of the Sixth Army in Manastir demanded the resignation of the government, which was justified by the Kosova uprising.¹⁴⁷⁵

The pressure by the officers on one hand, deserting day by day with many of them going to the mountains, and on the other, that of the Albanian insurgents, who were increasingly expanding, giving their war national proportions, as reflected in the involvement of the southern detachments in the military operations against the Ottoman forces, such as those of Themistokli Germenji, Sali Butka, Spiro Bellkameni, Menduh Zavalani, etc. – made Said Pasha resign. Previously, on July 9, the Minister of War, Mahmud Shevket Pasha, a strong-willed architect, resigned, having come to power after extinguishing the so-called counter-revolution of 1909, but with the recent defeats in Kosova and the revolt movement within the army, had turned into a target being fired at from all sides.

Then, on July 21, Mehmed V elected Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, president of the Senate, with the task of forming the new government and elected Mehmed Ferid and Hysen Nazem from Vlora, two independent candidates from the Young Turk Committee, foreign minister and the other war minister respectively.¹⁴⁷⁶

At the first meeting of the new cabinet, the newly appointed Grand Vizier told his members in a ghastly way that the “*Unity and Progress*” Committee had “no more than three or four days to live”.¹⁴⁷⁷

He also made it clear that his cabinet would not be in the service of the Committee, but rather in the interest of protecting the Ottoman Empire from the devastation that was coming

¹⁴⁷³ Idem, p. 476.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Idem, p. 476.

¹⁴⁷⁵ See confidential report from Hall addressed to Bertchtold, Manastir, 27 June 1912, no. 65, HHStA, PA XIV/39, Albanien XXXIV.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 295.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Idem, p. 295.

from within from the wrong policies of the Young Turks. He came to power with a definite task, the most urgent of which was to make peace with the Albanians.¹⁴⁷⁸

Thus, on July 24, 1912, the Council of Ministers formed a three-member commission: Danush Bey Prishtina, the former governor of Thessaloniki, General Sylejman Kolonja, senator and governor of Plevla, and Esad Pasha Toptani, a deputy from Shkodra. These three Albanians had to investigate the matter as soon as possible and, as it was said, create opportunities for reconciliation with Albanians.¹⁴⁷⁹

Government guidelines for the Commission on Albanians, among others, stated that Albanians were “*the strongest and most important part of the Ottoman nation on the side of Rumelia*”, while Albania, which according to the guidelines for the Commission, consisting of four vilayets: of Kosova, Shkodra, Manastir, and Janina, was “*one of the most remarkable parts of this great remnant*” and that the Albanian demands will be placed “*within the circle of legality and the Constitution.*”¹⁴⁸⁰

The Council of Ministers formed this commission at the request of the Sultan, dated July 22, 1912, calling for “*an end to the iniquities and injustices*” in Albania.¹⁴⁸¹

Unlike the last uprising a year before, the one in the Northern Highlands, when the Minister of War, Mahmut Shevket Pasha and his general Turgut Pasha, after suppressing the Albanian uprising through means of war, and with the Young Turk government praising for imposing order among Albanians, this time, Albanians with their well-organized uprising, acting on clear political demands, with epicenter in Kosova, and gradually including in various forms other parts of Albania in the resistance, will include parts of other of Albania, although, as expected, they had succeeded in overthrowing the Young Turk government, they would soon force the dissolution of the parliament dominated by the Young Turks, thus paving the way for a major reversal of imperial proportions. Thus, those who had brought the Young Turks to power four years before, this time turned into the cause of their overthrow. The arrival of the Government Commission in Prishtina had to justify this great change, which was a result of the Kosovo Albanian uprising.

However, Esad Pasha Toptani will not come to Kosovo. The reasons for “escaping from responsibility” may be that he was a participant and signatory of the Taksim Agreement when the decision was made on the Albanian uprising and the request for the autonomy of Albania, where he was charged with the responsibility of organizing the uprising in Central Albania and in the Vilayet of Shkodra, but he had not done so,¹⁴⁸² as Myfid Bey Libohova, who was in charge of the uprising in the Vilayet of Janina, had also failed to do so.¹⁴⁸³ The Council of Ministers appointed Rashid Aqif Pasha. However, he also fell ill and was replaced by Ibrahim Pasha, an Albanian from Manastir, and Avni Gjinali, a valuable patriot, was appointed secretary of the commission.

Gazi Ahmet Myftar Pasha directed the government towards an agreement which would be reached through talks with the insurgent Albanians. The commission arrived in Prishtina on July 27, 1912, when the insurgents had already taken control of all the cities of Kosova to finally enter Prishtina on July 21 without any resistance from the Ottoman army, which largely surrendered. In the circumstances of these important military successes, it was natural for Albanians to focus on the demand for an immediate dissolution of parliament, as a precondition

¹⁴⁷⁸ Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 386.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Idem, p. 119.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 119.

¹⁴⁸¹ From the instructions of the Prime Minister to the Government Commission sent to Kosovo. “*Leka*”, special no., and - Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 119.

¹⁴⁸² Idem, p. 119.

¹⁴⁸³ More on the non-fulfillment of the commitments of the Tax Agreement on the organization of an all-Albanian uprising by Esad Pasha Toptani, Myfid bey Libohova and others see: Prishtina, Hasan: “*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh*”, Bari, 1925; Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, Cana, Zekeria: “*Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare në Kosovë 1908-1912*”, Prishtinë, 1979, pp. 223-231; Pllana, Emin: “*Kosova dhe reformat në Turqi*”, Prishtinë, 1978.

for further talks. If this point was not implemented, Albanians would resume attacks after 48 hours. This was a well-measured ultimatum that could highlight the true balance of power at the top of the pyramid of the Sublime Porte after the fall of the Young Turk government and the appointment of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha as Grand Vizier. In advance, the Albanian ultimatum was preceded by the first meeting of the insurgents led by Hasan Prishtina with the Commission led by Marshal Ibrahim Pasha, whereupon the latter was informed by Hasan Prishtina of the Albanian demands summarized in the following points:

- a) To officially recognize the borders of Albania.
- b) Civil and military authorities to be of Albanian nationality.
- c) The Albanian Army to serve in Albania and be commanded by Albanian officers, and
- d) Acts by officials in Albania should be done in the Albanian language.¹⁴⁸⁴

The general tried to treat the Albanian uprising as a local movement, pertaining only to Kosova, but failed in the face of Hasan Prishtina and other insurgent leaders, who suggested that it was an Albanian national movement. Were it not for some separate insurgent movements and if it were not for the solidarity of a part of the Albanian territories with the Kosovo Uprising, of course the Ottoman Marshal could have been right. But Hasan Prishtina, well aware of the trap set by the cunning pasha, immediately replied that Kosovo had been deliberately designated as the epicenter of the uprising, as had happened during the “Albanian League of Prizren” and as had always been the case, while other parts awaited the epilogue, which if failing, would ignite simultaneously the entire Albania at once.¹⁴⁸⁵

However, Ibrahim Pasha, in his demand for autonomy, worked to divide the Albanians, arguing that it was dangerous for the fate of the Albanian lands and for the fate of the Albanian nation itself, at a time when the Balkan Alliance was getting ready to start hostilities in case the Ottoman Empire would allow Albanian autonomy. In fact, for a moment he told Hasan Prishtina that this was the way of separating themselves from the Ottoman Empire, which “*would not be appropriate for Albania to ask for such points, as the people are Muhammadan*”.¹⁴⁸⁶

After replying that “*religion has nothing to do with nationality*”, Hasan Prishtina, in this overture of the talks, made a fiery attack against the Young Turk regime. He enumerated all the acts of violence committed by the Young Turks against his country stressing the destruction done. As a final point, he mentioned the recent elections. He said Albania was a united unit and demanded an immediate dissolution of parliament as it did not have the mandate of the people.¹⁴⁸⁷

Ibrahim Pasha had replied that the Sultan had sent a special commission to study the complaints of the Albanians and take into account their reasonable demands.

To escape the pressures that the Government Commission was exerting on the leaders of the movement in various forms, especially on some who were shaking, and to avoid the divisive efforts made in those days by various Serbian emissaries and their diplomats in Kosovo (especially of Consul Mijović in Prishtina) against some Albanian leaders with whom they had contacts and met during the talks, Hasan Prishinta moved the center of the uprising from Prishtina to Ferizaj and invited representatives from all provinces of Albania to come to the national assembly in Ferizaj.¹⁴⁸⁸

Against the determination of the Albanians, the Turkish government, which was already in parliamentary difficulties, was forced to bow to Albanian pressure and on August 5, 1912, despite the great despair of the “*Union and Progress*” Committee, dissolved the parliament by imperial decree.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Prishtina, Hasan: “*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh mbi kryengritjen shqiptare të vjetit 1912*”, Prishtinë, 2009, p. 30.

¹⁴⁸⁵ See: Prishtina, Hasan: “*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh mbi kryengritjen shqiptare të vjetit 1912*”, Bari, 1925, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Idem, p. 30.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Report coded “top secret” by Tahy addressed to Bertchold from Mitrovica, 4 August 1912, no. 45 HHStA, PA XIV/39, Albanien XXXIV. See also Prishtina, Hasan: “*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh...*”, Prishtinë, 2009, p. 30.

¹⁴⁸⁸ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2002, p. 490.

This decision gave a heavy blow to the hitherto omnipotent Committee of “*Unity and Progress*” strengthening the position of Gazi Muhtar Pasha’s cabinet. Ironically, during the period of the Albanian League of Prizren, Abdyl Frashëri and other members of the Albanian unions had expressed the desire for Gazi Muhtar Ahmed Pasha to be the head of the single province of Albania. Thirty years later, the same Ottoman head of state headed the same cabinet that would grant Albanians their right to nationality.¹⁴⁸⁹

The dissolution of the Parliament satisfied only a part of the insurgents, the followers of the opposition “*Freedom and Understanding*”, the so-called *itilafists*, who were relatively strong in Kosovo and they came from the ranks of the Turkophiles. In Kosovo, however, two currents will have the main say, with different interests: that of the *autonomists*, led by Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga and part of the Albanian aristocrats, and that of the *Hamidian conservatives*, followed by the Albanian feudal lords and part of the country’s leadership: Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, Bajram Curri, Riza Bey Gjakova, and others. The autonomists’ wing felt strengthened enjoying the support of Central and Southern Albania, at least declaratively, although neither South nor Central Albania had fulfilled their commitments under the Taksim Agreement in regard to insurgent action, when Esad Pasha Toptani had pledged to organize the uprising in the Shkodra Vilayet, while Myfid Bey Libohova, Azis Pasha Vrioni, and Sylejman Bey Vlora had undertaken to organize the uprising in the vilayets of Manastir and Janina.

Despite the failure to fulfill the commitments made in Taksim, however, almost all Albanian areas felt connected to the Kosovo uprising and the demands made there. It was investigated that a common national spirit permeated both the south and the north of the country. In this spirit will be the common political demands, which focused on autonomy. In this regard, it is noted that Elbasan and Shpati, together with their greetings sent to the new cabinet, reiterated the demands that were common to both the Gegs and Tosks, i.e. on the possibility of establishing Albanian autonomy. The Albanian Committee of Fier asked the Grand Vizier to be represented by two delegates in the ongoing talks in Kosovo, as these discussions would focus on common interests between the north and the south, which further reduced the chances of playing with the card of division among Albanians so that the demands of Kosovo were separated from those of other parts, as had happened during the uprising of Malësia e Madhe a year before.¹⁴⁹⁰

Ismail Qemali, Omer Pasha Vrioni, Aziz Pasha Vrioni, Colonel Haki Tatzati, Izet Bey Zavalani and others attended the meeting in Fier. A telegram was sent from the meeting to Hasan Prishtina, authorizing him to speak and decide on behalf of southern Albania.¹⁴⁹¹

The Fier meeting decided that Ismail Qemali should not go to Kosovo, but to Istanbul to hold talks with the government.¹⁴⁹²

Ismail Qemali’s failure to go to Prishtina on the grounds that he had to talk to the government of Gazi Muhtar Pasha, who was interested in an agreement with the Albanians, would weaken Hasan Prishtina’s position from within – as he was forced to compromise with the current of the Hamidians, who instead of political solutions, such as autonomy, demanded the return of Sultan Hamid – and he would also be weakened in relation to the Ottoman Empire, as this disconnection created favorable circumstances for gossip, intrigue and even disinformation plotted by the Ottoman government and other centers, which began to be coming from different sides.

The intention was creating the impression that the insurgents were neither united nor determined in many respects, especially in the package of demands related to Albanian autonomy, which should have been their priority. This situation is best reflected in a statement issued by Belgrade’s “*Politika*” newspaper, which circulated widely in European centers, stating that Ismail Qemali, who was in Vlora, informed the Ministry of the Army that the Albanians of

¹⁴⁸⁹ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 296.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Report addressed to the Foreign Ministry from Vlora, on 7 August 1912, HHStA, PA XIV/41, Albanien, XXXIV.

¹⁴⁹¹ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 490.

¹⁴⁹² Idem, p. 490.

Southern Albania on his intervention had given up their special demands”, i.e. from Hasan Prishtina’s 14 points.¹⁴⁹³

On the other hand, facing a situation where he kept all the responsibility, in relation to Ibrahim Pasha, made Hasan Prishtina more dedicated, bringing him out as the only leader who faced one of the biggest historical challenges of Albanians in general. In this way, however, Hasan Prishtina, although alone, received many messages of support from different parts of Albania, as well as various delegates, who came to support him. Thus, support came from delegates from Manastir, who travelled to Prishtina to present their demands there. Elbasan sent its representatives, among who were the patriots Lef Nosi and Ahmet Dakli. Meetings were held in Preveza, Leskovik, and Gjirokastra, while the leaders of Janina telegraphing the Grand Vizier, making the same demands as those of other Albanians.¹⁴⁹⁴

After numerous talks and discussions, facing an aggravated international situation (the Balkan Alliance was concluded leading to a war with serious consequences for Albania as well), Hasan Prishtina and the other leaders of the uprising, in order to avoid divisions in the Albanian leadership, presented another program of demands, more moderate, which would be more acceptable for the Sublime Porte. The latter also needed a maneuvering space even in the circumstances when it was more than clear that Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha and many others from the ruling leadership of the Empire had realized that it was the agreement with the Albanians and the fulfillment of their demands that defended the Ottoman Empire and not the other way around, as Sultan Hamid and most recently the Young Turks had thought and acted. This mutually balanced submission, known as the “*Hasan Prishtina’s Fourteen Points*”, was approved by the representatives of the Albanian uprising in the assembly held in Ferizaj, on August 6, and presented to the Ottoman side.¹⁴⁹⁵

Before the text of the Memorandum was handed over to Ibrahim Pasha, at the request of Isa Boletini, it was given for reading to the representatives of the Kosovo Serbs, respectively the representatives of Serbia in this assembly, who did their best to prevent the autonomists wing from winning, as Serbia was interested in the Conservatives continuing the uprising and even marching on Thessaloniki in order to weaken both sides (Albanians and Ottomans) and then make it easier for Belgrade to realize its predatory aspirations on Albanian territories.¹⁴⁹⁶

Faced with these threats and the determination that the agreement between the Albanians and the Ottoman government was in the mutual interest, on August 9, 1912, Hasan Prishtina together with the leadership of the Kosovo insurgents, who already had the mandate of almost all Albanian territories, met with Ibrahim Pasha. Hasan Prishtina presented the fourteen following demands:

1. *Implementation of justice in some areas of Albania according to the “mountain law”;*
2. *Performing military service in Rumelia, except in cases of war or in special situations within the country;*
3. *Return of confiscated weapons;*
4. *Appointment of officials who knew the language and customs of the province;*
5. *Construction of high schools and agricultural schools in the provincial capitals of Janina, Shkodra, Manastir, and Kosova, in which teaching would be conducted in Albanian;*
6. *Construction of more primary schools;*
7. *Granting freedom to open private schools;*
8. *Introduction of the mother tongue in primary, secondary or higher cycle schools;*
9. *Road improvement and widening;*

¹⁴⁹³ See “*Politika*” - Belgrade, on 12 August 1912, and - Abdyli, Tahir “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë 2003, p. 144.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Halle addressing Berthold, Manastir, 8 August 1912, no. 89, and 15 August 1912, no. 95; Bilinski addressing Berthold, Janina, 15 August 1912, no. 61, all at HHStA, PA XIV/41, Albanien XXXIV.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Idem.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Prishtina, Hasan: “*Nji shkurtim kujtimesh*”, Prishtinë, 2009, pp. 32-33.

10. Installation of additional nahiyas;
11. Respect and esteem for the moral principles of the Islamic religion and the constitutional laws of the Empire;
12. Open trial for the government cabinets of Ibrahim Haki and Said Pasha;
13. A general amnesty, and
14. Payment of restitution for damaged properties.¹⁴⁹⁷

As shown here, the issue of autonomy was not mentioned, as the main point emerging at the Junik Assembly and, in various forms, representing the trunk of the political demands of the Albanians since the Albanian League of Prizren. Observing each of the points separately, in addition to the general aspects related to the need to preserve the Ottoman Empire as a shield that currently served Albanians to protect themselves from the claims of neighbors, also highlighted the interests of currents within Albanians – conservatives, demanding the return of privileges and the Kanun, the aristocracy and intellectuals, demanding autonomy within a modern state, and of the opposition from the ranks of the *Vetlilafs* (the *Freedom and Agreement* party).

Demand for the Albanian language as the language of education and language of administration, compulsory primary and secondary education, returned Albanian nationalism to the main attributes that allowed Albanians the status of nationality, thus creating the conditions for administrative and political autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman government will not respond within forty-eight hours to the Memorandum of the Fourteen Points of the Albanians. Ibrahim Pasha's behavior gave the impression that he still wanted to divide the Albanians, although in principle the government of Gazi Muhtar Ahmed Pasha was not interested in a disorder among the Albanians, fearing that this way the conservative forces between them could win, which were still in the minority compared to the autonomists and the opposition, but which were greatly encouraged by Serbia and its Balkan allies, who did their best to ensure that there was no agreement between the Albanians and the government but a further deepening of the crisis. This prompted some of the leaders of the uprising to march to Shkup continuing with even harsher ultimatums, which could lead to the continuation of the uprising with other even more radical demands. Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, Bajram Curri and, above all, Riza Bey Gjakova joined together and ordered the forces to advance towards Shkup, arguing that "their people could not wait any longer".

Between 12 and 15 August, the Albanians entered Shkup without encountering any resistance. The first group of insurgents to enter the city was that of Bajram Daklani and Zefi i Vogël, who unfurled the Albanian national flag.¹⁴⁹⁸

The last to enter was Bajram Curri with the main insurgent forces of about 6,000 men. As soon as he entered Shkup (Skopje), Bajram Curri opened the prison and released hundreds of handcuffed prisoners. It was estimated that about 30,000 Albanians entered Skopje in three days, staying calm. Some units headed for Tetova, Kumanova, and Presheva, where they also met no resistance. The Ottoman army remained in barracks and did not oppose the march of Albanians in Shkup and other surrounding towns. There was a firm order not to succumb to provocations.¹⁴⁹⁹

The restrained attitude of the Ottoman army in Shkup and other parts on the occasion of the penetration of the Albanian insurgents in the cities, speaks clearly of the determination of Gazi Muhtar Ahmed Pasha seeking an agreement with Albanians and of the pressure that in this way would be exhorted on the opponents to accept it as soon as possible.

Faced with a new development, such as the entry of the Albanian insurgents in Shkup, as well as the possibility that a wing of the insurgents (Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, Bajram Curri and Riza Bey Gjakova) would find a reason to continue the uprising and even, as it was suspected,

¹⁴⁹⁷ Gawrych, George: "Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja", Tiranë, 2007, p. 298.

¹⁴⁹⁸ "Historia popullit shqiptar", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 491.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Cana, Zekeria: "Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare e Kosovës 1908-1912", Prishtinë 1979, p. 238.

marching towards Thessaloniki to bring Sultan Hamid back to the throne, the Ottoman government, on August 18, declared that it accepted the Memorandum of the Fourteen Points of the Albanians, with the exception of two demands:

- Return of weapons of war, and
- Opening trial against members of Young Turk cabinets of Haki Pasha and Said Pasha.

The explanation was that the approval of these points fell within the competence of the Parliament.¹⁵⁰⁰

There are indications that Gazi Muhtar Ahmed Pasha discussed this issue with Austro-Hungarian diplomats in Istanbul and agreed with them on the project of Albanian autonomy. Vienna's stance on the deal, as well as a vigorous warning to Russia and the Balkan Alliance that the results of the war will not be accepted, but it will be politics that will decide the fate of the Balkans, make it clear that the Memorandum of Fourteen Points of Shkup had the Vienna-Istanbul consent, and with it that of the Tripartite League. Because, without the independence of Albania and the Albanian state emerging from it, there would be no support of the Great Powers at the Conference of Ambassadors in London, nor would it be accepted.¹⁵⁰¹

The leadership of the uprising in Kosova stated that it accepted the agreement and announced the cessation of the uprising. Hasan Prishtina also informed the representatives of Central and Southern Albania to stop their armed actions against the government troops, even though they had not been so disturbing for the Ottoman Empire. He announced in this case that the demands of the insurgents were accepted for the whole of Albania. Thus, in these circumstances the uprising was halted.¹⁵⁰²

Albanians had achieved a significant historic victory and could hope they had an open ground ahead, where with the recognition of the right to nationality (*hukuk-u kavimiyet*), which ensured the free development of national identity, the doors were open to them for building of autonomy, or what was already viewed with concern by the neighbors of the Albanians (Serbs, Greeks, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians) as "Ottoman Albania", which, according to them, had to be prevented at all costs.

THE BALKAN WAR AND DECLARATION OF ALBANIA'S INDEPENDENCE

More disturbing than the content of the agreement of the Albanian insurgents (Hasan Prishtina's Fourteen Points) with the Ottoman government for the Albanians' neighbors, and not only for them, was that the Albanians, through pressure and in accordance with their own interests, had reached that degree of influence as to change the policy direction of the Ottoman Empire. This was shown on the occasion of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 when they, upon an ultimatum issued by the Ferizaj Assembly, were brought to power and it was shown again by the recent uprising, when the Albanians had overthrown the Young Turk government and forced the dissolution of the parliament dominated by the "*Union and Progress*" Committee just days after it had been elected.

This development, in fact, had determined the direction of the crisis in which the Ottoman Empire was involved from within and without at the same time, because the agreement with the Albanians reached in Shkup (Hasan Prishtina's Fourteen Points) had accelerated the outbreak of the First Balkan War, initiated by the Balkan Alliance (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria), which due to their aspirations in the region, did not want Albania to join under the protection of Ottoman sovereignty. Because, it was already clear to these countries that the Albanians were politically mature, as they had been factorized from within and without, which

¹⁵⁰⁰ Idem, faqe 494.

¹⁵⁰¹ For more see: Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Nga Shqipëria Osmane te Shqipëria Europiane*", Prishtinë, 2010.

¹⁵⁰² Abdyli, Tahir: "*Hasan Prishtina*", Prishtinë, 2003, p. 155.

could not have ended otherwise than with an independent Albanian state regardless of the routes through which it would pass? For neighboring countries, Hasan Prishtina's Fourteen Points, although the word autonomy was not mentioned there, clearly spoke of the inevitable emergence of an Albanian state entity in its ethnic space, which had to be prevented as soon as possible by war. Therefore, it was worthwhile to go to war against it before it was too late. So, the war was inevitable.

Actually, the active movement of the Balkan countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) against the possible Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, in order to prevent it by the means of a joint war, had just begun as soon as Italy entered the war against the Ottoman Empire in Tripoli. Serbia and Russia began to renew their efforts for a Serb-Bulgarian alliance, convinced that Ottoman rule in the Balkans was coming to an end.¹⁵⁰³

As the Balkan states demanded war against the Ottoman Empire and the land coveted by them in Albania, the repeated demands of the Albanians had deeply shocked them fearing that on an agreement with the Sublime Porte, as suggested by Vienna, they would easily get out of hand. Therefore, peace between the Ottoman Empire and the Albanians as well as their agreements were seen as harmful and dangerous, as it changed the balance of power in the region and beyond.

The concern of the Balkan states about an Albanian autonomy began to manifest itself more openly and squarely when the true dimensions of the Kosova Uprising and its solidarity with it in other parts of Albania, regardless of their passive attitude, emerged. The Bulgarian envoy near the Porte, Sarafov, told Pallavicin (the Viennese ambassador in Istanbul) that the news of a possible merger of the four Albanian vilayets into an autonomous administrative unit was shocking.

*“Such a measure would give the Albanian element absolute dominance and jeopardize the vital interests of other Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek elements - who lived in those vilayets.”*¹⁵⁰⁴

This situation, and the warnings that the “consenting” outcome of the agreement between the Ottoman government and the Albanians about their internal autonomy gave the green light to the Albanians’ neighbors to go to war with the Ottoman Empire, seriously worried Austria-Hungary. Vienna feared that the situation could no longer be monitored or that the framework for development could be defined.

Vienna was not unprepared for this development, especially knowing that it supported the government of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, which had established some peace in the internal crisis of the Ottoman Empire and was trying by substantial concessions, which went so far as to end plans for the recognition of their autonomy, to put an end to the revolt of the Albanians. On this road, which presented an important but very challenging turn at the same time, Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha had come to the conclusion that the conciliatory attitude with the Albanians and the fulfillment of their demands, even those leading to political and administrative autonomy, which was opposed by all sides, was beneficial for the stability of the Empire, but also of its remaining European part. In another way, beyond the ultimatums and threats made by the Slavic countries, which had designed the partition of Albanian lands, this would make the Albanians instead of a dam against Pan-Slavism appear as a “bridge between civilizations”, which as such could be defended, but also accepted much more easily, for which it had the support of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy.¹⁵⁰⁵

Towards this important overcoming, Vienna was interested that the status of the Albanians come first through the recognition of their nationality, so that it, step by step, gained political

¹⁵⁰³ E. G. Helmreich: *“The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913”*, Cambridge, 1938, p. 47, and Skëndi, Stavro: *“Zgjimi Kombëtar shqiptar”*, Tiranë, 2000, p. 402.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Report by Pavalacini addressed to Bertchold, 5 August 1912, no. 66, HHStA, PA/39 Albanien XXXIV.

¹⁵⁰⁵ See more about reports on the eve of the Balkan wars and various scenarios: Čović, J: *“Odnosi Srbije i Austrougarske u XX veku”*, Beograd, 1936; Šeredan, A: *“Balkanski rat i austriska intervencija”*, Niš, 1913; Tejlor, A: *“Borba za prevlast u Evropi 1848-1918”*, Sarajevo, 1968; Tucović, Dimitrije: *“Srbija i Arbanija”*, Beograd-Zagreb, 1945; Puto, Arben: *“Pavarësia shqiptare dhe diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912-1914”*, Tiranë, 1978.

equivalence, towards autonomy. Thus, Berchtold came to the conclusion that the Great Powers had to put pressure on the Balkan countries not to oppose the agreement of the Albanians with the Sublime Porte for internal decentralization and equal rights of the Albanian language, as this would preserve the *status quo*.¹⁵⁰⁶

Russia was dissatisfied with Vienna's stance, as it understood what that meant, especially by "*internal decentralization*" and "equal rights of the Albanian language", and therefore expressed to Italy the view that "*Berchtold's real objective was to create an Albania ruled by the Dual Monarchy*".¹⁵⁰⁷

There was no doubt that an Albania as Russia saw it would be under the great influence of Austria-Hungary - though not ruled by the double monarchy, because it didn't even need to as it opened up unnecessary rivalry with the Italians who belonged to the same pact. This was even demanded by a good part of Albanian intellectuals, who knew that in the absence of the transitional phase, i.e. the autonomies, through which had passed almost all the Slavo-Orthodox countries that had been liberated from Ottoman rule (Serbia with 27 years of autonomy; Romania with 7 years of autonomy; Bulgaria with 30 years of autonomy, Greece with 12 years of autonomous supervision), they definitely needed a great civilized European power that would "compensate" them for the time of autonomy in the circumstances of they didn't have it.

In addition to these possible objections to the issue, which with the organization of the Kosova Uprising and the agreement of Hasan Prishtina with his Fourteen Points and Ibrahim Pasha, when the Young Turk rule would collapse, the greatest opponent of European powers, had already been factorized appearing both excessive and impassable. Thus, in addition to trying to sow discord among the countries included in the Triple Pact, when it was more than clear that the Albanians already had the inevitable support, Russia continued to oppose Vienna's intentions for possible Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire since it would appear as the only option that could maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans. In response to this option there was an instigation of treaties between the Balkan countries: first the Serb-Bulgarian treaty, on March 13, 1912; then between the Bulgarians and Greeks, on May 29, 1912, and the last between Serbia and Montenegro, on October 6, 1912, two days before Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁰⁸

The pact between Serbia and Bulgaria on Russia and its plans to take advantage of the Balkan war on the eve was the most important, as Russia thus created hegemony in the Balkans based on the Slavo-Orthodox platform, where its word would then weigh especially heavy when the destruction of the Ottoman Empire came about.

In fact, the Serb-Bulgarian pact, in addition to well-known issues, contained a covert appendix, according to which Bulgaria recognized Serbia not only in Serbian-populated lands, but also its annexation of Albanian lands to the north and west of the Sharr Mountains (Central, Northern and Northeastern Albania). Serbia recognized Bulgaria's lands east of Rhodope and the Struma River. The territory between the Sharr Mountains, the Struma River and Lake Ohri, with the main cities of Dibra, Kërçova, Gostivar, Manastir, Tetova, Kumanova, and Shkup, was called a "disputed area" and Russia's Tsar was appointed arbiter to resolve the issue.¹⁵⁰⁹

Serbia's pact with Montenegro, signed two days before Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire, was more of a formal issue, since between Cetina and Belgrade from the time of what appeared to be an artificial crisis in Macedonia (1903) both countries had agreed that Montenegro would extend to Shkodra and the Northern Highlands, including the Dukagjin part from Peja to Gjakova. Serbia would take the main part of the Kosova Vilayet and more than half

¹⁵⁰⁶ Kr. T. v. Sosnonsky: "*Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866*". Vol. II. Stuttgart and Berlin, 1914, pp. 276-281.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Salvatorelli, L: "*La Triplice Alleanza, storia diplomatica, 1887-1912*", Milano, 1939, pp. 445-446, according to Skëndi, Stavro: "*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*", Tiranë, 2000, p. 404.

¹⁵⁰⁸ On the Balkan Alliance see: Ratković, B: "*Srbija i Crna Gora u Balkanskim ratovima 1912-1914*", Beograd, 1972; Stanojević, S: "*Srpsko-turksi rat 1912 godine*", Beograd, 1928.

¹⁵⁰⁹ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2000, p. 492.

of the Manastir Vilayet. Important, however, in this pact was the role that Montenegro had to play in involving Catholic Albanians in the war with the Ottomans for its own interests. Cetina already had many allies between the Albanian Catholic tribes from Great Highlands to Podgorica. Among them, however, was Sokol Baci, who had openly sided with the Montenegrins.¹⁵¹⁰

Supported by Russia, Serbia continued its direct pressure on the Ottoman Empire not to accept the Albanians' demands for autonomy. But so did Belgrade, which had armed some of the Albanian feudal lords and filled their purses, encouraging them to move against the Ottoman Empire with the "fraternal help of the Serbs" with whom they "would share the fruits of freedom together". Several times it will protest to Istanbul, instead of talking to the Albanians, to use all military force against the insurgents, whom it called "Austro-Hungarian agents who were fighting to stab the Empire, and with it the region, turning it into a German feud."¹⁵¹¹

Belgrade warned the Ottoman government that if the demands of the Albanians were met, new, very dangerous shocks could not be avoided, especially for the Ottoman Empire. Belgrade and Sofia also urged Russia and Britain to intervene decisively against recognizing the autonomy of Albanians.¹⁵¹²

Serbia's threats, as well as Russia's dissatisfaction with the agreement with the Albanians, forced the Ottoman government to take soothing measures, claiming that what would be given to the Albanians would extend to the non-Albanian peoples of the vilayets of Kosova, Manastir, and Janina. Even as early as September, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry instructed its diplomatic representatives to avoid talks about Berchtold's proposal on measures to decentralize the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire and recognize the right of Albanians as a nation as equal to the others, to declare decisively that the Porte called the Albanian problem its internal issue.

This did not please the Balkan states at all. In fact, they showed no interest in the decision of the Ottoman government of September 24 to extend the "privileges" granted to Albanians to non-Albanian populations in the vilayets of Rumelia. Because, the Balkan roulette against the Albanians and against the right to have their own state, as supported by Russia, had already been prepared and it only waited for the "cause" to get it started. The Ottoman Empire already knew this, but ironically, it hoped that this time, it would be the Albanians and their account with them, who would be taken into protection by other European powers (especially from the countries of the tripartite axis: Austria-Hungary and Germany), which would save them!

In late September, the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states mobilized their armies. Montenegro ordered a general mobilization on September 30th. Bulgaria did so on October 1st, and Serbia two days later. Seeing that war was already imminent, despite differences of opinion, the main supervisors of the Balkans, Austria-Hungary and Russia, declared on September 7 on behalf of the Great Powers that, in the event of war between the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan states, at the end of conflict, powers would not allow any change in the territorial *status quo* in the Balkans.

At a time when the end of the war was not known, Vienna intended, through this statement, to prevent the expansion of the Balkan states at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, while Russia to ensure the protection of its Balkan allies in case of defeat.¹⁵¹³

The same statement will be repeated by Vienna to Ismail Qemali on the occasion of his meeting in Budapest on November 17, when the Viennese Foreign Minister Berchtold assured him that "*the occupied Albanian territories will be subject to international review*".¹⁵¹⁴

¹⁵¹⁰ Ratković, B: "Srbija i Crna Gora u Balkanskim ratovima 1912-1914".

¹⁵¹¹ More about Serbian propaganda in the wake of the Balkan wars and its anti-Albanian arsenal see: Perunović, Branko "Pisma srpskih konzula sa Prištine", Beograd, 1985.

¹⁵¹² Idem, p. 502.

¹⁵¹³ Kr. T. v. Sosnonsky: "Die Balkanpolitik Österreich-Ungarns seit 1866". Vol. II. Stuttgart dhe Berlin, 1914, pp. 276-281.

¹⁵¹⁴ Buxhovi, Jusuf: "Kthesa historike 3", Prishtinë, 2010, p. 200.

It was a well-known fact that in those circumstances it was clear that two things were to be understood that, however, would be hopeful and significant for Albanians:

First - that Albania and its territory will be “*considered occupied territory*”, and

Second - that “*they will be subject to international review*”

The first issue was of great importance because it made it clear that the war of the Balkan states against the Ottoman Empire would not be considered a “*liberation war*”, as was widely propagated by Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria, but it was bound to be a “*an occupation war*”, which meant that “*Serbian lands*”, or “*Montenegrin lands*”, or “*Greek lands*”, and “*Bulgarian lands*” were not “*liberated*”, as these states put it, giving themselves the right on behalf “*of that right*” divide the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, which mainly extended to the four Albanian vilayets, where there was also a non-Albanian population, though in a minority.

The second issue was also of great importance to Albanians and their fate, as it confirmed what was already known, that Vienna and others had said many times that unilateral violations of the *status quo* were taken first as actions against international agreements, regardless of the results, and that, inevitably, passed through the “*green table*”, i.e. were subject to international review. That meant that war would not determine the direction of politics, but politics would determine its fate. For peoples like the Albanians, who, judging by their neighbors’ plans had already been included in the list of the “*disappeared*”, the war overture was the only opportunity to find the savior from the ranks of the great powers, which they can do, of course in accordance with their interests.

Despite the stance of Vienna and Russia, the Balkan war began on October 8, when the Montenegrin army, after launching hostilities on the Albanian border towards Tuzi in the direction of Shkodra and in the north in the direction of Plava and Gucia, declared war on the Ottoman Empire. On October 17, Serbia and Bulgaria entered the war. And a day later, Greece too.

It should be noted that Montenegro and Serbia, as soon as they entered the war, addressed the Albanians with a “*brotherly call*” to join them, because that war, according to them, brought freedom to them as well.

King Nikola of Montenegro started the war against the Ottoman Empire with the introduction of Albanian units on the front lines to Shkodra and Kollashin to Peja. Montenegro had more than 6,000 Catholic Albanians in the mountains of Malësia e Madhe and Mbishkodra at gunpoint, promising to gain an autonomous Albania. The Albanian national flag was even left to the highlanders until the eve of the war, but the moment the war started and many of the Albanian parts, thanks to the war of the Albanians included in Cetina’s army, fell into the hands of the Montenegrins, instead of the Albanian flag, that of Montenegro was raised.¹⁵¹⁵

Albanian highlanders, who had taken an active part in this war alongside the Montenegrin armies, will soon see the deception, but then it will be too late. The same will happen with the Albanian units that took part in the fighting in the direction of Peja. The Montenegrin army put the Albanians on the front lines of the fighting. Many of them, as they learned they were not fighting against the Ottomans, but against the Kosovo Albanians, deserted. Vasojević’s brigade, in its incursion into Dukagjin, had over a thousand highlanders in its ranks. They were forced to take part in the terror that Montenegro’s army used against Albanians, especially after occupying Peja and Gjakova.

Even Serbian King Petar, in a manifesto he announced at the beginning of the Serbian military campaign, demagogically declared that he would bring freedom, brotherhood and equality to Albanians. On the day that the Serbian armies attacked Merdar, the commander of the

¹⁵¹⁵ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 504.

Serbian forces, General Božidar Jaković delivered a proclamation to the Albanians with the symbolic title and in Cyrillic letters *“To all the tribes in Albania – brethren”*.¹⁵¹⁶

These and similar proclamations indicated the dire and tragic situation in which the Albanians found themselves, when the Ottoman armies were unable to defend them (since most of them were fleeing the fronts and regrouping in two directions with as few casualties as possible), while they were burdened to do so, although the struggle for the protection of their lands simultaneously confronted them with the burden of supporting the invaders (in this case the Ottomans) and countering the “liberators” (the Balkan Alliance fighting the Ottomans).

Under these circumstances, all Albanian strata were held accountable for their stance on the Balkan war in order to save Albania from the catastrophe that threatened the Ottoman Empire. But how could this be done when the Balkan armies started the war against the Ottoman Empire under the motto *“of the liberation war against the centuries-old Ottoman rule”*, while aiming to occupy Albanian lands and prevent Albania from becoming a state?

This will be best shown by the behavior of Serbia and Montenegro, which will enter Albanian lands with *“fraternal calls”* for a *“joint liberation war”*, while appearing in the role of a new occupier which aimed at the complete destruction of the Albanian being.¹⁵¹⁷

In fact, here and on this slogan, Albanians will see very well the difference between the struggle for equality (Albanian autonomy) with legitimate means within the Ottoman Empire,

¹⁵¹⁶ The full text of the proclamation written in Cyrillic (linguistically corrected) is as follows:

“To all the tribes in Albania – brethren”

“Everyone knows, without the name of the Almighty God, nothing on the face of the earth can be done.

We have set out in the name of Allah, and with the help of Allah, we are coming to you with our horses. We are coming to your land and ours, which has been occupied by the Ottomans for five hundred years, but we are not coming to oppress you, but to free you of oppression.

You see for yourself, brothers, what the Ottomans are doing (especially the Young Turks). They have been doing all kinds of things. Using the military and cannons the houses were demolished, villages were torn down, their people were trampled, prisons were filled with your sons, and nowhere, not even on the doorstep, were they left alone. The oppression that an Albanian cannot take from an Albanians, and above everything they are taking your sons and taking them to Anatolia, and to Arabia, to shed their blood for them.

For that, and for many of those needs, you have led the nation, you have fought bravely with them, and what happened? When they could not stop you with their cannons and rifles, they deceived you, telling you in kind words what you were begging for, but not for certain.

They have stopped you from war, brothers, but in the name and by the power of God, we are starting the war from where you left off, and in the name of our Lord, the needs that you have fought so hard for, will be fulfilled when we come to you.

We are coming to you, brothers, to bring you the righteous salutation, and to make you: with the old trinity, the ancient humanity, the ancient honor, and the old respect back to yourselves, as it used to be in the ancient days for the things you hold dearest, and for it we will shed our blood, as for our own.

Do not doubt it, brothers, for it is the promise of Allah, we do not come to quarrel, but we come on the Mountain besa, and with grace. Do not doubt it will be done differently, but then you will have your own religion, your own customs and rule among yourselves, as you wish. And, the way Albania had them from Lekë and to this day.

We swear the trust of God to you, that we will leave behind all the bad things, what we had so far, and we'll have it no other way, but everyone will be getting: religion as religion, honor as honor, goods for the goods, and no one may inflict oppression to anyone.

We will fire our guns against those who shoot at us, and if God permits, we will turn to ashes that house and village that fires a gun back at us, and the one who receives us as a brother, we will hug brotherly, like brother to brother, standing with one hand: God's besa, for justice and humanity, and with the other one we are carrying weapons and fire.

This kind of besa we are offering to you, and greetings we send for the time has come, brothers, to tear down the yoke of the Ottomans, and we with you, and you with us live brotherly thanks to Kralj Petar who made us a name, to this health and with faith, be led.

So, brethren, in the name of Kralj, we swear, and this with health, together with the faith of God, we are coming. We are paying back the debt before God and people. For our besa, we hold as witness the greatness of God, and whoever is the cause of bloodshed, may God punish him with his greatness.

Let us meet in joy, brethren!

Tersherinievel 1328.

N. Podujevo

*Commander of Serb army,
Bozidar Janko*

¹⁵¹⁷ See Ratkovic, B: *“Srbija i Crna Gora u Balkanskim ratovima 1912-1913”*, Beograd, 1972.

which had been the motto of the Albanian National Movement since the “Albanian League of Prizren” onwards, and the “liberation war” (as a Slavo-Orthodox model), against the Ottoman Empire, manifested since the devastating Macedonian crisis and on, which first and foremost hit them.

However, the Albanians will not be able to remove the predicament they were already facing about defending the Ottoman Empire to protect their existential interests (so as not to fall prey to neighbors who were at war with the Ottoman Empire) and the responsibility not to roll into the abyss along with it?

From the beginning of October, the newspaper “*Liri e Shqipërisë*” (“*Albania’s Freedom*”), which represented the opinion of the Albanian colony of Sofia, anticipating the events, addressed the Albanians with the following call: “*Let us take up arms and protect the borders of our homeland, demanding the autonomy of Albania.*” The same newspaper asked Albanians to follow Sami Frashëri’s instructions in the work “*Albania what it was, what is, and what will be?*” to give a strong blow to Turkey not to roll with it into the abyss.¹⁵¹⁸

At the same time, Austro-Hungarian representatives in Romania telegraphed to Vienna that Albanians in Turkey had decided to serve on the front: those of the Janina vilayet against Greece, those of Shkodra against Montenegro, those of Kosova and the Sanjak against Serbia, and those of Manastir against Bulgaria.¹⁵¹⁹

Looking out of the context of the real social and political realities, it turned out that the Albanians on the Balkan front between the Alliance of Balkan Countries sided with the Ottoman Empire, in case of loss of war would be faced with consequences, as it would happen indeed.

But the Albanian-Americans, who formed the non-Albanian “*Vatra*” association in April of that year, were of the opinion that the Albanians should fight on the side of the Ottoman Empire, convinced that it would not be broken by the Balkan allies. They were inclined to believe that Austria’s poor sympathy for Albania would turn into a concrete political action useful to it. For the sake of Albania, they proposed giving the word and any help to the Ottoman Empire.

This opinion will be especially emphasized by Faik Konica and Fan S. Noli.¹⁵²⁰

The priest, Naum Care, in the meeting organized by “*Vatra*” said about this issue:

*“By accepting the demands of the Albanian insurgents, Turkey made possible the national existence of Albania. This development was a deadly blow to the Balkan states’ infringers. Therefore, it seems clearly that our interest lies in a cordial cooperation with the Turkish army against the enemies of the Empire, which are mainly the enemies of Albania.”*¹⁵²¹

Even before the war began, the Ottoman Empire mobilized Albanians in its army. The message of the leaders of the uprising to the fighters and all the Albanian people from Shkup, after their demands were accepted, was that the homeland should be protected from the threats that were on the verge, but this was only a patriotic call that did not lead to an organization assigned. In the absence of an Albanian organization of at least the level seen during the uprising of that summer, this meant cooperation with the Ottoman army, which had promised special measures for the involvement of Albanians in the defense of the country, such as the surrender of weapons and the possibility of the organization of special reserve units, which would be led by military instructors, specially trained by German experts well prepared for such challenges.¹⁵²²

¹⁵¹⁸ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 504.

¹⁵¹⁹ Czerni addressing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coded telegram no. 1263, 6 October 1912, HHStA, PA XIV/41, Albanien, XXXIV.

¹⁵²⁰ “*The Albanian Struggle in the Old World and New*”, Boston, 1939, pp. 48-49, and Skëndi, Stavri: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 408.

¹⁵²¹ Idem, p. 50.

¹⁵²² “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 505.

But neither will happen. Because, 50 thousand weapons that were said to have been sent to Kosovo and were handed over to some of the local leaders (Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, and others), for unknown reasons, will not be distributed.¹⁵²³

However, in Albania, with the outbreak of the war, the initiative for a political action to get the country out of the difficult situation was taken by the patriotic societies: “*Shpëtimi*” (“*Salvation*”) Committee and “*Shoqëria e Zezë për Shpëtim*” (the “*Black Society for Salvation*”) established in Shkup. Their representatives Sali Gjuka, Nexhip Draga, Bedri Pejani, Mit’hat Frashëri, and others, organized a meeting in Shkup on October 14, after receiving the approval of Hasan Prishtina, who together with some of the leaders of the August uprising, had gone to the front to protect Albanian lands.¹⁵²⁴

The meeting came up with a position to inform the Great Powers:

*“Albania has taken up arms not to strengthen Turkey’s dominance in the Balkans, but to uphold the territorial integrity and freedom of Albania. So, from now on, we are declaring to you that, whatever the fate of the weapons, the Albanians will accept in their four vilayets nothing less than a single form of government and rule.”*¹⁵²⁵

In fact, the Shkup proclamation, which was submitted to the representatives of the Great Powers in Shkup (Skopje) on October 16, represents the essence of a political manifesto, which reflects the Albanian position on why they were fighting about, and also the attitudes about their future in post-war circumstances:

“To uphold the territorial integrity and freedom of Albania,” and

“To make it known that “whatever the fate of the weapons, the Albanians will accept in their four vilayets nothing less than a single form of government and rule.”

Consequently, these two issues explain very well the essence of the Balkan War and its absurdities, which were best highlighted in the Albanian issue with the fact that it will not be liberating, as proclaimed, but rather invading, because the armies of the Balkan Alliance, according to preliminary agreements, each rushed to invade parts of Albanian lands and thus create facts committed by force through which the declaration should have been prevented, as well as the acceptance of independent Albania, which would be inevitable in those circumstances.

Actually, the acts of violence, i.e. the occupation of Albanian lands by the Montenegrin, Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian armies, took place within a short time, after they had defeated the Ottoman army on all fronts. Although, realistically speaking, this was not expected to happen, given the ability of the Ottoman army and its superiority over the European forces and the very good armament it possessed.¹⁵²⁶

The Bulgarian troops, after breaking the resistance of the Ottoman forces concentrated in Eastern Thrace, turned to Adrianople. Montenegrin forces, divided into three columns, attacked two in the direction of Shkodra and one in the direction of Peja. Within three weeks, they occupied Peja and headed for Shkodra.¹⁵²⁷

On October 15, the attack of the Serbian troops in the region of Vranje began, while on October 18, the whole army of 120 thousand people attacked, in the direction of Nish-Manastir-

¹⁵²³ Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, pp. 170-173.

¹⁵²⁴ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 505; Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 162.

¹⁵²⁵ Newspaper “*Populli*”, no. 43, cited according to Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 162.

¹⁵²⁶ The military forces of the Ottoman Empire in the European part in relation to those of the Balkan allies (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria) were about thirty thousand more. The Ottoman forces numbered 256 thousand, while the joint ones of the four countries about 220 thousand. The Ottoman army was concentrated in three large armies: that of Edirne (with about 120 thousand soldiers), of Manastir (with 80 thousand soldiers), and of Janina (60 thousand soldiers). Alongside them were also reservists, mostly Albanians numbering over 60,000. Even in terms of military equipment (light and heavy armament), the Ottoman army was significantly in better condition than those of the Balkan countries. The two Ottoman artillery divisions had over 1000 medium- and long-range caliber cannons, mostly German-made, which had just been stationed in the European part and were led by German military instructors.

¹⁵²⁷ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 505.

Elbasan, Nish-Manastir-Thessaloniki and Kurshumli-Prizren-Durrës. Other forces attacked from the north, in the direction of Rashka-Mitrovica-Peja and Javor-Prepolje.¹⁵²⁸

The Ottoman forces, after splitting in two: one in the eastern part further on Adrianople and the other in the direction of Shkodra and Janina, almost without resistance, yielded all space to the invading Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek armies towards the Albanian space. Reserve units (mostly Albanians) and Albanian volunteers were left on the front lines. The latter went to war thanks to the organization made by the leaders of Kosova, primarily Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Bajram Curri, Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, and others, focusing on the part of Podujeva, that of Kumanova, and Shkup. The eastern front aimed to stop the invading armies (Serbian and Bulgarian), hoping that the Great Powers would be able to stop the incursion of their armies into Albanian territory.

But, evidently, the Great Powers will not do that. On the contrary, they began to deal with the post-Ottoman period. So, all the Albanian resistance, although heroic, did not last more than two weeks. Although they inflicted significant losses on Serbian forces on the Podujeva and Kumanova fronts, this will not be enough, as they involved well-organized and well-equipped armies with various artillery and weapons, before which they were defeated. But the Serbian and Montenegrin armies, taking advantage of the fact that they presented the Albanian resistance in defense of their lands as a “*war of the Albanians to protect the centuries-old Ottoman occupier*”, had just entered their lands, in accordance with known anti-Albanian elaborates began settling accounts with the vulnerable population.

Thus, the special Serbian units committed serious crimes against the Albanian population. Women, children and elderly were massacred. While their artillery flattened entire villages, forcing those who survived the massacre to move out. It is estimated that during the invading war operations in Kosovo, the Serbian army massacred over 50,000 Albanians and the Montenegrin about 20,000. Over 150 thousand more people crossed as refugees into Albania or took the road to Turkey. This was one of the massacres of the size of the genocide against the Albanian population, which did not go unnoticed from outside, being condemned though without consequences.¹⁵²⁹

In addition to the numerous massacres, the Serbian occupying army in November arrested some of the leaders of the Albanian movement, committed to protecting Albanian lands from occupation. Among them were Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Idriz Seferi, Sait Hoxha, Kasum Seferi, and many others. Refusing to sign declarations of allegiance to Serbia, they were imprisoned in Belgrade, where they were held until May 16, 1913.¹⁵³⁰

For propaganda purposes and to add “Serbian patriotic morality”, the Serbian government sent several thousand Albanian prisoners of war from Belgrade to the Kumanova front to parade in the “victorious parade” in early December 1912 when the Serbian army declared “*the liberation of Serbian lands occupied by the Ottoman Empire*”.

On the occasion, Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjević, in front of an enthusiastic Serbian crowd, stated:

“*I just want a few thousand Europeans to come here responsibly and see the Albanians we have captured, and to convince them that these people can hardly be called people and to gain the conviction that the Balkans must be cleansed of these savages.*”¹⁵³¹

Karadjordjević’s words explain the whole strategy of the Balkan Wars and the goals pursued by Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria towards the Albanians and their cause, trying to remove by means of war their inevitable political treatment.

¹⁵²⁸ Idem, p. 505.

¹⁵²⁹ See more about the massacres of the Serbian army during the occupation of Kosovo by Serbian authors: Tucovic, Dimitrije: “*Srbija i Arbania*”, Beograd, 1945, Leo Freundlich: “*Golgota shqiptare*”, 1913; Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003.

¹⁵³⁰ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 508.

¹⁵³¹ Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003, p. 171.

The occupation of Albanian territories, their division into four parts, the exercise of genocide against the Albanian population, had to prevent at all costs the Albanian factor to take the role of a “*dam against Pan-Slavism*”, which was first mentioned by the English representative in Congress of Berlin in 1878, becoming a political conjuncture of the Western sphere of interest.¹⁵³²

The defeat of the Ottoman army and the Serbian, Montenegrin, Greek, and Bulgarian invasions of the remaining of European Turkey (mainly Albanian lands) brought about significant movements between the Great Powers, primarily in Austria-Hungary. Vienna was already clear that the violence perpetrated by the allied Balkan armies was a fact that not only undermined the political balance in the Balkans, but also changed the spheres of interest in this part for the benefit of Russia, which was unacceptable to it, and also to other countries of the Trilateral Axis, and even to England.

Thus, as early as October, several ministerial conferences were held in Vienna to discuss issues of Austrian interest. One of them (between 25 and 30 October) dealt extensively with territorial changes in Albania. As for the fate of Albania, the conference expressed its opinion that it was in the vital interests of the Monarchy to preserve that country regardless of the outcome of the war.¹⁵³³

Since it was imperative for the Monarchy to stop a large force, or even a small one, from setting foot on the eastern Adriatic coast, especially in the Ionian Sea, it was thought that an autonomous Albania, or in the event of the fall of Ottoman sovereignty, an independent Albania should be created.¹⁵³⁴

As far as the territory of this entity was concerned, it was in the interest of its stability and power to include as many Ottoman lands inhabited by Albanians as possible. On this occasion, it was stated that in the new circumstances - it was thought of those of the invasions by the neighbors in Albania – it should be able for an independent life.¹⁵³⁵

This item of the program was communicated to Germany on October 30 and to Italy on November 3.¹⁵³⁶

When it became clear that the *status quo* could no longer be maintained, Berchtold proposed to Russia on November 17 an exchange of views on the demarcation of the borders and the internal organization of Albania. Only the creation of an independent Albania and the security of its territory remained a clear goal of the Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy.¹⁵³⁷

On November 21, Avarno officially communicated to Vienna that San Giuliano agreed to the program for Albania, but a detailed response from Rome was sent on November 24.

Vienna was already appearing as the only and safest address of the Albanians in those very tragic circumstances, as shown by a request of the leadership of the Tirana-Durrës area, on November 12, 1912, when most of the Albanian vilayets were occupied by the Balkan allies, addressing the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph II, demanding that Austria-Hungary come to the aid of the Albanians. They called on the Emperor of Austria-Hungary to ensure the preservation of Albania's territorial integrity and to grant it full autonomy within the Ottoman state.¹⁵³⁸ If Turkey, as a result of the war, were to rule over Albanian land, they wanted to create an Albanian kingdom similar to that of the Balkan peoples. If possible, this kingdom would be like Belgium or Switzerland to maintain balance in the Balkans. They concluded that their hopes remained with Franz Joseph II.¹⁵³⁹

¹⁵³² For more see: Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kongresi i Berlinit 1878*”, Prishtinë, 2008.

¹⁵³³ See “*Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik 1908-1914*”, Wien, no. 4170.

¹⁵³⁴ Idem.

¹⁵³⁵ Idem.

¹⁵³⁶ Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 410.

¹⁵³⁷ See Berchtold's discussions at L. Salvatorelli: “*La Triplice Alleanza, storia diplomatica, 1877-1912*”, Milano, 1939, pp. 450-452, according to Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 410.

¹⁵³⁸ Idem.

¹⁵³⁹ Idem.

A week later, a call from the Great Powers from Istanbul will be addressed by Albanian personalities in Istanbul - and they were a lot like Tosks, Gegs, Christians and Muslims. Among other things, they said that the Great Powers should intervene as soon as possible to stop the catastrophe that was threatening the Albanians and to resolve the Albanian issue once and for all in accordance with the law. The call states that the Albanian people, known for their efforts for independence in both the past and present, deserved to be respected by the Great Powers. They stated that the Albanian people would not allow any change in the territorial *status quo* of the part of European Turkey that would trample on their rights. They would not allow the Balkan states to interfere in the administration of the lands belonging to the Albanians. They would maintain their customs, develop according to social and political concepts, and remain masters of their own destiny.¹⁵⁴⁰

For Albanians to remain “masters of their own fate”, as Istanbul intellectuals claimed in a statement to the Great Powers, in circumstances where the allied Balkan armies had already invaded Albania and divided it into four parts, at least it seemed to depend on their own will. On November 17, after Serbia invaded Kosovo and its troops surrounded Durrës, while the Montenegrins, Greeks and Bulgarians had divided Albanian lands into four parts, Faik Konica, in a meeting of “*Vatra*” in Boston, spoke in utter despair:

“Turkey has been defeated and Albania has been violated and in danger of being divided. What should we, the nationalist Albanians, do to save our homeland?”

His answer to this question was:

*“We must ask for help from the Great Powers so that Albania does not fall prey to predatory neighbors.”*¹⁵⁴¹

In the face of this tragic reality, Albanian-Americans addressed through telegrams the emperors of Austria and Germany and the King of Italy, the Pope, the Foreign Ministers of Russia and France, and the United States of America with a demand to prevent the partitioning of Albania.

However, telegrams, appeals, letters and protests were not enough. Political and diplomatic action was required to the extent of a historic responsibility to be taken by the leaders of the Albanian National Movement, precisely those who at the beginning of the year had been determined for the Albanian uprising to overthrow the Young Turk regime in order to create the circumstances for the realization of Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. However, in those tragic circumstances, this was almost impossible, because the Ottoman Empire had lost the war with the Balkan countries, which had consequently occupied the Albanian lands and divided them into four parts, exactly as Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria had predicted in their treaties concluded long ago. While the main leaders of the Kosovo uprising, which had led to the overthrow of the Young Turk government and the dissolution of parliament (Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Idriz Seferi, and others), while organizing to defending Albanian lands from the invasions by neighbors were imprisoned by Serbia and sent into exile in Belgrade.

Thus, the occupation of Albanian lands by the Serbian, Montenegrin, Greek and Bulgarian armies, in addition to the unprecedented military terror against the defenseless population, had prevented any political activity that would be linked to the fate of Albania.

And, if nothing could be done in Albania, however, Istanbul and the Albanian Diaspora remained, from where the initiative to start the voice of Albania should began as soon as possible, whatever it was: autonomous or independent.

This burden will fall on Ismail Qemali, the man who until then had been an important Albanian personality at the same time a politician and senior diplomat from the Ottoman hierarchy, who could be taken seriously by the external factor.

¹⁵⁴⁰ See the petition of the Albanians sent to Pallavicini and his report of 19 November 1912, from Constantinople, no. 88, HHStA, PA XXI/47, Türkei XXXXV/6.

¹⁵⁴¹ “*The Albanian Struggle in the Old World and New*”, p. 50, cited according to Skëndi, Stavro: “*Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar*”, Tiranë, 2000, p. 412.

In fact, with this task, Ismail Qemali was charged on the occasion of the Taksim Agreement in February when together with Hasan Prishtina and others they shared the tasks for organizing an Albanian uprising, ending up with the Memorandum of the Fourteen Points of Shkup, drafted by Hasan Prishtina, and accepted by the Ottoman government, which practically opened the doors to achieving Albanian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. With Hasan Prishtina being almost the only to fulfill the obligations taken from the Taksim Agreement, with the start of the Balkan war, together with most of the Albanian leaders engaged in Kosovo to organize the defense of Albanian lands from Serbian and Montenegrin invaders, he would be arrested by the Serbs in the front lines along with many others. It was up to Ismail Qemali to continue the major work by Hasan Prishtina and other patriots who in cooperation and agreement with the Great Powers, on this occasion with Vienna as the only ally possible, to ensure the protection of Albania, for which he had the approval of the Tripartite Pact.

Ismail Qemali himself admits that *“when the Balkan allies declared war on Turkey and the Bulgarian armies had occupied Kirk-Kilis, while the Serbs had occupied Shkup, I realized that it was time for us Albanians to take strong measures to save ourselves.”*¹⁵⁴²

In these circumstances, when the fate of Albania depended on the Great Powers, Ismail Qemali had no choice but to turn to Vienna for final help, the only supporter, in the hope that there he would receive support for the way to save Albania and for a decision to be taken. Before leaving for Romania, accompanied by Luigj Gurakuqi, he told an Italian newspaper that *“he saw no other solution to the Albanian problem than an Austrian intervention”*.¹⁵⁴³

In this case, it meant support ranging from political to military intervention.

In Bucharest, Ismail Qemali had to receive support from the most powerful Albanian colony about the decisive steps, which had always been important for the Albanian National Movement.

On November 5, at a meeting with a wide circle of Albanian patriots and activists, the following was decided:

- *establishing a steering committee that will take over the governance of the country;*
- *forming of a commission that will travel to Europe with the task of defending before the governments of the Great Powers “the national rights of the land of the Albanian people”;*
- *establishing a committee in Bucharest that would coordinate the activity of the committees inside and outside Albania in order to help the homeland more efficiently.*¹⁵⁴⁴

The Bucharest meeting could not decide whether Albania would become autonomous or independent, as this depended on the developments of the time and the attitudes of the Great Powers.

Afterwards, Ismail Qemali met in Bucharest with the Austro-Hungarian envoy to Romania, Prince KE Fyrstenberg, to present his views on the Bucharest meeting, which led to a joint demand for Vienna to assume the role of protector of the Albanians.

After the Austro-Hungarian envoy informed his government of the demands of the Albanians and the expectations they had from Austria-Hungary, Ismail Qemali was informed that Vienna was waiting for him to talk about further steps.¹⁵⁴⁵

Ismail Qemali took the trip to Vienna by train, where he arrived after a 24-hour journey. On November 12, Ismail Qemali was received at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Monarchy by several senior officials. In this meeting, Ismail Qemali spoke only about the possibility of organizing an autonomous Albania.¹⁵⁴⁶

This was a diplomatic and political position at the same time, which was related to the position of the Great Powers, which had stated that the fate of the European part of the Ottoman

¹⁵⁴² Vlora, Qemal Ismail: *“Kujtime”*, Tiranë, 1997, p. 369.

¹⁵⁴³ Skëndi, Stavro: *“Zgjimi kombëtar shqiptar”*, Tiranë, 2000, p. 412.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Idem, p. 413.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Vlora, Eqrem bej: *“Kujtime”*, First Volume, Tiranë, 2001, p. 314.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Vlora, Qemal Ismail: *“Kujtime”*, Tiranë, 1997, p. 370.

Empire, i.e. Albania, regardless of the results of the war, would be decided on the green table, which would be organized soon.

On this occasion, Ismail Qemali came up with the idea that a meeting of Albanian dignitaries should be convened, and from then on, with the positions taken, a memorandum should be addressed to the Great Powers, which would include the demands of the Albanians. Ismail Qemali stressed the need for the Ottoman government to order the military and civilian authorities in Albania to cooperate with the leaders of the National Movement towards the transfer of autonomous power to the Albanians and thus round off the agreement with the Albanians in Shkup in August in accordance with the Fourteenth Point Memorandum of Hasan Prishtina.¹⁵⁴⁷

During this meeting, Ismail Qemali continued to act in accordance with the spirit of the Albanian agreements with the Ottoman Empire, relying on the Memorandum of Fourteen Points drafted by Hasan Prishtina, signed in Shkup. This leaves much to be desired for a political and diplomatic maneuver necessary for the Great Powers to save the country from the real disintegration that threatened them in the circumstances when the Ottoman Empire had lost the war in the European part and it was up to them to have the main say for her further fate. But their positions had to be referred to the latest act of the Shkup agreement reached between the Albanians and the Ottoman Government, which, at the same time, was in line with the position of the Great Powers so far, that the agreements of the Ottoman Empire with the peoples of the European part about their future would be respected. Such was the case with Shkup, which had to be supported.

Senior Foreign Ministry officials in Vienna told Ismail Qemali nothing new but repeating what the semi-official press of the Monarchy published in those days, that Austrian sympathy for Albanians and their developments was profound and that their desire was for Austria to support the national integrity of their homeland in order to ensure peace in the Balkan Peninsula. They could not discuss specific issues which was still premature, due to the state of war.¹⁵⁴⁸

Ismail Qemali received the final and decisive support for Albania's declaration of independence from Berchtold in Budapest on 17 November. In his "*Memoirs*" Ismail Qemali says that "*Berchtold approved his views on the Albanian national cause*" and from that day on the same day he telegraphed to friends in Durrës to invite delegates to that city or Vlora. He assured them "*that Albania's position was secured*".¹⁵⁴⁹

In fact, when Ismail Qemali said that "*Albania's position was secured*", it meant exactly what would be said emphatically during the meeting with Berchtold that: "*One should no longer think about the autonomy of Albania, but rather about an independent state, which had to be declared within a few days, so that Albania would appear as such at the next international meeting.*"¹⁵⁵⁰

It was a matter of a firm stance, which official Vienna had already coordinated and was expected to open at the right time.

Vienna has already been committed to the option of declaring an independent Albanian state, as the only possible option in those circumstances being even in accordance with Austro-Hungarian interests to prevent the expansion of Serbia to the Adriatic. This is best explained by the measures that the Monarchy took over for Ismail Qemali to declare independence within ten days, so that the Conference of Ambassadors, which was scheduled to be held in London, would find it an accomplished fact.

Those measures were of a diplomatic, political and even security nature. Though it was necessary to find a palm-size Albania not occupied by Serbia, Montenegro, Greece or Bulgaria,

¹⁵⁴⁷ Idem.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Daily Report no. 4398 on Ismail Qemali's visit on 12 November to the Foreign Ministry in Vienna, published in "*Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik 1908 -1914*", Vienna.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Skëndi, Stavri: "*Zgjimi Kombëtar Shqiptar*", Tiranë, 2000, p. 414.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Idem.

where Albanians would legitimize this act. So, in addition to taking measures for Ismail Qemali and his companions to travel to Albania from Trieste – being provided with a ship escorted by the frigate of the navy, which will land in Durrës - Berchtold, the same day, had telegraphed to his deputy consul in Durrës, Ludwig von Rudnay, to welcome Ismail Qemali and his comrades and be at disposal to help them if difficulties arose.

The Austrian diplomat was instructed not to touch on the form of the government, but only be limited to saying “*that the Austrians will support the independence and integrity of Albania*”, a view also supported by Italy. Ludwig von Rudnay was warned to stay away from differences between Albanian politicians and to emphasize the need for unity among them. The telegram had to be communicated to the representatives of the Monarchy in Vlora and Janina.¹⁵⁵¹

In Durrës, Ismail Qemali will not feel safe enough to hold the assembly where Albania’s independence would be declared. There were two direct threats coming at the same time: the Serbian army, which was not far from Durrës and threatened at any moment to occupy it, and also the statement of the Orthodox bishop in Durrës, Jakovos, a Greek, “*that he recognized and honored one flag only, that of Turkey*”.¹⁵⁵²

There is no evidence that Ismail Qemali faced obstructions by the Ottoman forces, as has often been pointed out. Because, when he came down to Durrës still free from the Greek blockade, the city was under Turkish rule, where the prefect (mutesarrif) was an Albanian, Mahmut Mahir Efendi, while the most important man in the city and the surrounding area was Hamid Bey Toptani. Even the few gendarmes left in the city were all Albanians.¹⁵⁵³

Under the circumstances, as the Ottoman army was suffering losses on all fronts and for it, according to the preliminary instructions, the only concern was the grouping at the withdrawal points (Shkodra and Janina), even if it wanted to, was not able to bring trouble to Albanians any kind of organization.

Although the Ottoman Council of Ministers was unhappy with the course of events, they ordered Ottoman officials in Albania to continue their work seeking military assistance from Ismail Qemali for the Ottoman army, which had been trapped in southern Albania.¹⁵⁵⁴

Moreover, there are indications that some high-ranking Ottoman officials were pleased with Albania’s declaration of independence, because that was the only way to get a “good chance” that after losing the war with the Balkan powers, by introducing into the game an autonomous Albania, even under international supervision, defend their presence in the European part, as further developments will prove.¹⁵⁵⁵

Four days later, Ismail Qemali together with 27 delegates from different cities of Albania, passing through Kavaja and Fier (there he will meet with the delegates of Kosova, among whom Riza Bey, the Dragaj, Begolli, and General Mehmed Pasha Derralla), reaching Vlora on November 26, 1912.¹⁵⁵⁶

“*A sacred fire of patriotism had overwhelmed my eastern city, and enthusiasm and joy greeted us everywhere. In a short time I found myself surrounded by eighty-three delegates, Muslims and Christians, who had come from all over Albania, occupied or not by the fighting armies.*”¹⁵⁵⁷

Ismail Qemali says he did not have time to wait for the arrival of other delegates. As the forces of the Balkan allies advanced, especially the Serbs, who were approaching Tirana, Kruja, Elbasan and Durrës, and threatening to join the Greek forces soon, the situation was rapidly changing.

¹⁵⁵¹ Idem, See telegram coded “top secret”, no. 4498 to Deputy Council Rudnay from Berchtold.

¹⁵⁵² For more see: Vlora, Ismail Qemal: “*Kujtime*”, Tiranë, 1979.

¹⁵⁵³ Vlora, Eqrem bej: “*Kujtime*”, Book One, Tiranë, 2001, p. 314.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Gawrych, George: “*Gjysmëhëna dhe shqiponja*”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 306.

¹⁵⁵⁵ See: Pavalicini’s report from Constantinople on 8 December 1912, no. 88 HHStA, PA XXI/47, Türkei XXXV/6.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Vlora, Eqrem bej: “*Kujtime*”, First Volume, Tiranë, 2001, p. 316.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Idem.

On November 28, 1912, at 2 pm, the National Assembly was opened in Vlora. The first meeting of the Assembly was attended by 37 delegates, the number increasing during the following days, reaching 63 people, representing all Albanian areas. In addition to Ismail Qemali, those participating were: Luigj Gurakuqi, Sali Gjuka, Bedri Pejani, Rexhep Mitrovica, Vehbi Agolli, Nikollë Kaçori, Jani Minga, Abdi Toptani, Pandeli Cale, Dudë Karbunara, Lef Nosi, Mithat Frashëri, Mehmed Deralla, Hasan Hysen Budakova, Ajdin Draga, Sherif Efendi Dibra, Dhimitër Mbroja, Dhimitër Zografi, Shefqet Daiu, Rexhep Ademi, Dhimitër Berati, Kristo Meksi, Xhelal Koprencka, Spiro Ilo, Iliaz Vrioni, Hajredin Cakrani, Shefqet Vërlaci, etc. Isa Boletini arrived the next day with 400 of his fighters.¹⁵⁵⁸

Other Kosovar leaders, due to the circumstances of the war, could not attend, such as Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga, Idriz Seferi, Sait Hoxha, etc., who were being kept in a Belgrade prison, as well as Bajram Curri, who, although on his way to the Assembly, was kept by fighting on the way.¹⁵⁵⁹

The Assembly elected Ismail Qemali as speaker, who spoke about Albania's past under Ottoman rule and the Albanian wars to gain their rights. He pointed out that in the circumstances created by the Balkan War "*the only way out was the separation of Albania from the Ottoman Empire*".¹⁵⁶⁰

After Ismail Qemali's speech, the delegates signed the historic document on the Independence of Albania stating:

"As of today Albania is on its own, free and independent."

PART FOUR ALBANIA'S PARTITIONING

CHAPTER ONE LONDON CONFERENCE

A HALF ALBANIA AND KOSOVO AND MACEDONIA REMAINING UNDER SERBIAN OCCUPATION

¹⁵⁵⁸ "*Historia e popullit shqiptar*", Second Volume, Tiranë, 2002, p. 510.

¹⁵⁵⁹ *Idem*, p. 510.

¹⁵⁶⁰ *Idem*, p. 511.

The declaration of independence found Albania in a state of disarray. The Albanian state, which was sending messages from Vlora, was not only stuck in a few hundred square kilometers, filled with Albanian refugees from the occupied territories and Ottoman soldiers who had left the battlefields and sought refuge, but was surrounded from all sides with invading foreign armies, waiting for it to suffocate as soon as possible before it could even begin to breathe. For more, it seems almost absurd, but the news of independence may have been heard by more people abroad (from newspapers) and other sources than the Albanians themselves. Important, however, was the fact that for the proclamation of Albania as a state, those who did not want it knew and would make extraordinary efforts to prevent it, and they were many, and those chancellors and diplomats who were clearly aware that they would have to deal with it, at least in the sense of responding to the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans. The latter included other factors and issues in its resolution, from political, social to cultural and spiritual ones intertwined during a centuries-old history, which was not only a history of occupation, but also of a match of civilizations, which had left its deep traces, that new circumstances could provide political answers to but by no means vital and social to please everyone.

The political and diplomatic response demanded by the Ottoman heritage in the Balkans was not only the closing of the last part in the picture of the state mosaic which the show of Albania made complete, but it was that of the appetites of the neighbors of the Albanians (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria) that if they were met, this would make it impossible for them to open with new issues opening up, which would soon be presented as such.

In addition, at stake were also the interests of the Great Powers, which in principle agreed with the existence of Albania, though it could not be excluded from the conjunctures of the spheres of interest of the Entente countries and the Tripartite League, where on the one hand it favored an ethnic Albania (Austria-Hungary) and on the other it predicted a weaker Albania (Russia and France), which in itself would fall prey to neighboring countries and thus the Albanian question would cease to exist ostensibly due to the inability to self-test as a state.

Thus, with these concerns, in fact, the Conference of Ambassadors in London began, on December 17, 1912, a few days after the declaration of independence of Albania in Vlora, where its fate had to be decided, regardless of the fact that the country was occupied on all sides: in the north by the Montenegrin armies, in the Northeast by the Serbs, and in the South by the Greeks. The exceptions here were two Albanian cities: Shkodra in the North and Janina in the South, where the Ottoman and Albanian besieged forces resisted, though evidently with problems, which, at least in the South, will go in favor of the Greek invading goals against the Albanian lands.¹⁵⁶¹

Even occupied by its neighbors and struggling to survive, Albania had already entered the European political scene, regardless of the treatment it would receive. In these circumstances, however, Albanians saw that their main destiny was in the hands of the Great Powers. They had to fight with the argument that their deposits of the last thirty years (from the Congress of Berlin onwards) to create autonomy within the Ottoman Empire were not in the service of its maintenance and preservation, but rather in accordance with the provisions of the Great Powers. The time of the *status quo* had to be used for this purpose in order for the Albanian state to appear as an evolutionary development, which had to be treated responsibly, and not to be evaluated on the basis of logic between “liberators” and “invaders”, as demanded by the Balkan Alliance countries, thus categorizing Albanians and their cause into that of the “losers”, that is, on the side of the “invaders”, who had to be punished.

The Government of Vlora, from its first communiqué addressed to the Great Powers, tried to highlight this issue, but out of fear that in those circumstances it could be misunderstood, mentioned only the role of Albanians and their recent uprisings to weaken the

¹⁵⁶¹ “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, III, Tirana, 2007, pp. 19-21.

Ottoman Empire, which meant being held by the branches instead of the roots, which did not help them at all. On the contrary, it strengthened the “pretexts” for the Balkan Alliance countries to enter Albanian territory on the grounds that “the centuries-old Ottoman occupier was being fought”.

However, Albania was declared a state by the Albanians, regardless of the fact that the Albanian space was occupied on all sides by the armies of the Balkan Alliance. It was time to fight the “alibis”, which the occupying neighbors manipulated for allegedly being there on account that “they had been fighting the century-old occupier”. Albanians had to equally act based on their ethnic and living rights so that they too could live freely and on an equal footing with other European countries. Although, every effort should be made to ensure that the facts of the war did not turn into political facts, much less to be used as rewards, but to rather clarify that if they continued to be taken into account, then the “liberators” should be charged the load of the new invaders. It was therefore appropriate to deal with political and diplomatic arguments, as well as those of a civilized nature, especially knowing that even among the Great Powers in those tragic circumstances, the Albanians had supporters (among them the most zealous was Austria-Hungary), ultimately involved in the process of declaring independence not only politically (directing it) but also technically (creating the circumstances). This issue had to be used as much as possible.

The existential concern of the Albanians in those moments, at the same time and fortunately, corresponded to the concern of the Great Powers carrying it along with other issues to the green table. In this regard, the Albanian issue was of particular importance, as from the way of responding to it depended the future of peace in the region and beyond and rightly so, since it had already become a hub on which the political map of the Balkans seemed to be depending on, which was closely linked to the areas of their interest in the region. Thus, on this account, on the one hand, the countries of the Entente (France and England with Russia) and on the other hand those of the Tripartite Pact (Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy) appeared with different interests within them on the Albanian issue as to others, though the new circumstances had now brought to light and could not be postponed without crucifying each other.

It is this crucifying that will help Albania - to emerge as an independent state, but also harming it - to be accepted as halved, found between a maximum treatment, i.e. in accordance with the ethnic principles of natural extension and of the minimalist one - shrinking as much as possible, so as not to be able to withstand the test of survival.

The battle for Albania, on the one hand, would turn into a battle for the Balkans presumably to preserve the European appearance, and on the other hand for the seemingly Slavic-Orthodox Balkans, was to be expected and agreed upon as the war between the Balkan Allies (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece) were against the Ottoman Empire and its direction was known, as Vienna would be the one that immediately made it known to Russia that it was behind the integrity of the new Albanian state as an inevitable fact, although it left open the modalities of its acceptance as well as the governing form.

This was a deposit in favor of the Albanian state among the most important, which should be assessed correctly and in accordance with the circumstances, which removed doubts about its existence, which in some European centers were still kept open with the last war supposedly meaning to strengthen them to its detriment.

For more, Russia, which had led the whole scenario of the war of the Balkan Slavic-Orthodox countries against the Ottoman Empire and stood firmly behind their demands to divide the “liberated territories” among themselves, had necessarily agreed that Albania had to have its place among the Balkan states. Though, it envisioned it as a small principality, haphazardly, that would soon fall into the hands of the Serbs and Montenegrins, or remain their permanent vassal. Russia’s declaration in favor of the right of an Albanian state in the Balkans came as a result of pressure. They had agreed “in principle” in 1898 during the meeting between Franz Joseph and the Russian tsar on the creation of Albanian provided it

was created according to a bilateral agreement, so fifty-fifty,¹⁵⁶² as Austria-Hungary, and Italy needed it, which as such would suit Germany as well, as it was protected by its ally Austria, which was ready to go to war for it first with Serbia and Montenegro and then with Russia. It would not favor the latter, though it did not rule out, as an opportunity, a readiness that in the coming days and months will be demonstrated several times by Vienna and even become as the only means of diplomacy when the Conference of Ambassadors was being blocked by the arrogance of Montenegro and Serbia against Albania.

Russia also knew that the Entente countries, France and England, although they had no special interests in Albania, also agreed with the emergence of Albania as a country in the Balkans, regardless of the fact that France defended Greece's claims to the south of Albania. In principle, England remained neutral, but it was known that Albania was considered a country that had to maintain regional and European balances of interest at a sensitive point of contact between East and West, which London after the departure of the Ottoman Empire, attributed the role of the connecting bridge in a positive sense, although Russia and its allies tried to turn it into the opposite, that is, condemning it as a threat to Western Christian civilization with the assumption that Albanians with Muslim affiliation entered Europe as "*foreign body*" and dangerous for it, turning them into actors of "scenarios" for conspiracies "*on the basis of war of civilizations*"!

Such abomination towards the Albanians and their cause coming from Russia and its Balkan allies (Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians), was intended to exclude them from the basic principles, those of language and ethnicity, which the Great Powers had set as criteria for resolving all the issues opened by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the European part, where the Albanians appeared as one of the main factors.

The London Conference of Ambassadors, though without any prior preparation and agreement, natural in such cases, began with two previously constructed positions, which may be said to have been imposed by Austro-Hungarian diplomacy and its policy, which were also in line with the interests of the Trilateral League. And, they were:

a) On the recognition of the existence of Albania, regardless of the status to be assigned to it, and

b) on an agreement that the Balkan countries that won the war with the Ottoman Empire should be rewarded with territories, but not in proportion to their full demands, as this confused and even undermined the interests of the great European powers, those of the Trilateral League, especially of Vienna and Rome, who were not interested in saturating the Slavic states of the Balkans to the detriment of their interests, as this strengthened Russia's influence in this important part. But they also saw Albania's becoming a state in the (non) fulfillment of mutual appetites for the deepest possible expansion in the Balkans, which Albania hindered.

Both Great Britain and France were against the strengthening of Russian influence in the Balkans, which, although fighting any Austro-Hungarian gain in these developments, could not allow it to take advantage of the new situation. In this regard, the United Kingdom, which took on the role of "savior of peace" that was to be achieved by balancing the interests of the Great Powers, defended an Albania that was the only one able to help this goal, which was of great importance for London politics.¹⁵⁶³

Here, in fact, were the chances of her survival.

For Albania, however, it was important to recognize its existence from the beginning, no matter how it was done, being key to resolving many other issues directly related to the beginnings of normalcy, which could not be restored without the withdrawal of the armies of

¹⁵⁶² On the meeting of Franz Joseph with the Russian Tsar and their position on the future Albanian state in accordance with a joint agreement, which would respect the interests of Vienna and St. Petersburg, see Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Kosova*" I-V, Prishtinë, 2015, Vol. III (*Perandoria Osmane*), pp. 430-441.

¹⁵⁶³ For more on the interests of the Great Britain on the Albanian state see Guy, Nicola: "*Lindja e Shqipërisë*" ("*Birth of Albania*"), Tiranë, 2012.

the occupying countries, which held hostage most of the country under the circumstances of a military situation. It was also important that all ties with the Ottoman Empire be severed, so that it would not burden it with finding a place among European states. But, as seen at the outset, this will not only not happen, but will also make it harder for it to cross from East to West. Russia had even stated that “*it was in the interest of both European countries and the Albanians themselves to maintain ties with the Ottoman Empire, because of their mass acceptance of Islam, which had influenced and changed their mentality as a people!*”¹⁵⁶⁴

France too was not far from this opinion, although its justifications were not of the nature of “civilizations”, but simply practical, since according to certain assessments by its diplomats in Istanbul, “*the state organization of Albania and its administration would anyway preserve something of the long Ottoman state tradition, as they had played an important role in it.*”¹⁵⁶⁵

The abhorrence of the Ottoman heritage, which will be put into use, both for a while and for tactical reasons at the green table in London, continued to function in different ways and turning towards the Albanians in accordance with the difficulties arising before the Albanian state in the arduous path of consolidation.

Thus, from the first session, the Conference of Ambassadors, on December 17, 1912, under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Gray, decided that *Albania should be autonomous under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan and under the guarantee and exclusive control of the six powers*. The conference instructed Austria-Hungary and Italy to study and propose to the major powers the project on the organization of the autonomous Albanian state.¹⁵⁶⁶

Regarding the borders, the Conference decided in principle that autonomous Albania should be limited to the North with Montenegro and to the South with Greece. By this decision, by designating Montenegro as its northern neighbor, the Great Powers blocked the way for Serbia to enter the Adriatic by annexing territories in northern Albania. The role of Austria-Hungary here was decisive and expected even, as it ruled out the possibility of Serbia outletting to the sea, and this could be done by annexing the northern part, as had actually happened when its armies had infiltrated from Shëngjin to Durrës to militarily anticipate this claim. But, on the other hand, Serbia was granted the right to have a trade outlet at sea through a free and neutral Albanian port. It would be used by an international railway, under European control and under the supervision of a special international force, with transit freedom for all goods, including ammunition. The next day, on December 18, the Serbian government submitted to this decision.¹⁵⁶⁷

The decision of the Conference of Ambassadors on recognition, as it was said of an *autonomous Albania under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan and under the guarantee of exclusive control of the six European powers*, at that stage of the Conference was expected and was rightly considered a tactical step by the Great Powers, on the one hand, to give time to their further plans on how to deal with other issues pertaining to the complexity of the Ottoman legacy. On the other hand, the Balkan Alliance countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece) were informed that the Albanian factor in the Balkans and their independent state - Albania, had to be accepted, regardless of how much and how they had fought against its emergence, and no matter how much and how they would prevent it from gaining importance within the spheres of interest.

However, if the Sultan’s *sovereignty or suzerainty* remained, Albania would again become a bone of contention in the Balkans. This would best suit those who had fought against its emergence and who would continue to fight it in the future on the grounds that they

¹⁵⁶⁴ Zavalani, Tajar: “*Histori e Shqipnis*”, Tiranë, 1998, p. 241.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Idem, p. 237.

¹⁵⁶⁶ For more see: Swire, J: “*Albania, the Rise of a Kingdom*”, London, 1929; Stickney, E. P: “*Southern Albania or Northern Epirus in European International Affairs 1912-1923*”, Stanford, 1926; Pearson, O: “*Albania in the Twentieth Century*”, London, 2003; “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Vol. III., Tiranë, 2007, p. 20.

¹⁵⁶⁷ See: Swire, J: “*Albania, the Rise of a Kingdom*”, London, 1929; “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Vol. III, Tiranë, 2007, p. 21; Puto, Arben: “*Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912-1914*”, Tiranë, 2012, p. 142.

were fighting the “*last Islamic-Ottoman bastion*” in the southeast of the European continent and even they would turn this into a new Christian missionary ostensibly in defense of Western civilization, just as the great Serbian hegemony in the war against the Albanians had demanded since the emergence of Garašanin’s Serbia onwards.¹⁵⁶⁸

Although it cannot be said that the Government of Vlora had not taken such a decision into account and even in accordance with the ratio of forces and areas of interest between the Great Powers, in a way it had expected it, at least to be included in play as a testing or even depreciation instrument. Initially, it will oppose it, and rightly so, although a little later, it will be Ismail Qemali himself who will enter into some secret agreements with the Young Turks about their role in the uprising against the Serbian occupiers, which, although it will fail, they will be back in the game to continue their later mixing with serious consequences for the country and its fate.

Though, when it comes to the initial wording of the London Conference of Ambassadors of December 18, 1912, that is, when Albania would be declared *autonomous under the sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan*, of interest to that stage for Albania was the *emphasis on guarantees and exclusive control of the six Great Powers* over it, which was important and suited the Government of Vlora. The Great Powers were charged with a direct responsibility of monitoring the situation throughout the country, which the government of Vlora could not do even if it were given the mandate of government, as it will charge it with the responsibility of expulsion of invading armies outside the lines that the Conference would set as the border of Albania no matter how natural they were.

This will mark the beginning of the time of keeping Albania under international supervision, with several phases, a therapy that will not take the country out of the crisis, though at the same time will remove the risk of disintegration as a state, as her neighbors wanted and acted for. This therapy, in fact, continued in various forms from time to time, making known, on the one hand, the great international importance of Albania in the regional configuration, and on the other hand, highlighting its weaknesses as well as the weaknesses of Albanians to take over the fate of their country by becoming part of the games of others.

However, the recognition of Albania, even as autonomous and under the *sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan*, will not rid the Great Powers of effort to directly deal with it. On the contrary, it will be clear that what was taken for two months as the *Sultan’s sovereignty or suzerainty* not only failed to help its issue, but rather turned into a major handicap. On the one hand - from the inside, Albanians will revive confrontations over the pro-Turkish Islamist spirit, while on the other - from the outside, from neighboring countries (Serbia, Montenegro and Greece), the *Sultan’s sovereignty or suzerainty* would be exploited in order for it to be destabilized in various forms and thus, use the lack of consolidation to further expand over the Albanian territories, and by this to continue increasing Russia’s influence in the Balkans. Also, an autonomous Albania under the *sovereignty or suzerainty of the Sultan* could not have the stamp of influence of Austria-Hungary and the countries of the Tripartite League, as an autonomous Albania would have outside its ties with the Ottoman Empire.

Even ignoring the issue of the Sultan’s sovereignty or suzerainty, while it will be removed altogether by the decision of July 29, 1913, when the London Conference will finally accept the project of establishing an Albanian state, according to which *Albania was declared an autonomous principality, sovereign and hereditary, removing any connection of suzerainty with the Ottoman Empire*, it did not mean also removing the Ottoman shadow. Because, evidently, for a good while it will follow it incessantly going as far as Albania being overwhelmed by anti-European uprisings, which took place with demands to join Turkey. What already appeared as Ottoman Albania, at least as temporary and with anti-historical burdens, fought for life or death against European Albania, a war in which Albanians were

¹⁵⁶⁸ See: Morwat, R. B: “*A History of European Diplomacy 1914-1925*”, London, 1927; Marmullaku, Ramadan: “*Albania and the Albanians*”, London, 1975.

involved, with the breaks held by its opponents, the Slavic neighbors and Greeks, led by Orthodox Russia, who had many reasons for Albania to fall prey to self-destruction from within and on these grounds.

Even the *crisis of Shkodra, that of Janina and the issue of Kosova*, as three hotspots around which all the attention of the Conference of Ambassadors focused, two of them were directly related to the consequences of the Ottoman presence in the wars for their defense. Thus, Kosovo and the Albanian uprisings against the Serbian occupation during and after the Conference of Ambassadors in London will not be free from the involvement of the Young Turks, and their sometimes open and hidden attempts to exploit them for the purposes of the Albanian tragedy itself, which they had helped appear.

The crisis of Shkodra and that of Janina, initially presented as issues of a military nature, i.e. where in the first - even further would be fought between Montenegrin and Ottoman forces together with the Albanian defense forces, and in the second - the Ottoman forces fighting against the Greek forces, where Albanian defenders and volunteer patriots responded to a call by the Government of Vlora - they took the character of a war between “liberators” and “invaders”, with “liberators” being rewarded, and “invaders” punished!

Of course, the relationship between the “liberators”, in this case the Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek armies, and the “occupiers” - the Ottoman army, would be easily clarified, if the Albanians did not appear in the role of defender of their country from the “liberators”, which they automatically turned into new invaders, turning them in a way into allies of those who fought as invaders!

This sometimes incomprehensible “complication” from abroad and deliberately confused by Albania’s opponents, was intended to use the fight against the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, which mostly included Albanian ethnic areas, as a double “alibi” against the Albanians and their interests: on the one hand to occupy their lands under the pretext that a liberation war was being waged against the Ottoman occupiers, which in theory was so, and on the other hand, the Albanians were practically condemned as participants and comrades in arms with the Ottoman occupying armies against “liberators”!

Both Shkodra and Janina, especially the first, presented the most typical example of this complication, which might not be outside certain scenarios from abroad, to be used for certain purposes by those of holding it “as a reserve issue” and currency to weaken, to the point of distraction from certain points, of vital importance, such as Kosovo, where a terrible genocide was taking place against the Albanian population by the invading Serbian and Montenegrin forces, thus bypassing it.

That the Shkodra issue was of such a nature, there was no doubt. There are many signs that prove it. The very fact that it deteriorated at the moment the London Conference of Ambassadors, on March 22, 1913, under pressure from Austria-Hungary and Italy, categorically rejected Russia’s proposal that Shkodra secede from Albania and be granted to Montenegro is best proof to this. Because, Russia and Serbia were the ones that directly incited King Nikola to start the blockade of Shkodra under the euphoria of the nationalist slogan, “*Shkodra or death*”, as pressure on the one hand to protect the Serbian invasions in Kosovo and Macedonia and at the same time create opportunities for other divisions among the Albanians themselves (this was calculated in the factorization of Esat Pasha Toptani and his role in Shkodra), with which Vienna and Rome faced difficulties around their supporters, who had to take responsibility for governing Albania. This planned rift was clear to have been well thought out and Belgrade and Cetina had worked hard, in cooperation with Russia, with Esat Pasha Toptani coming into play both in relation to the outside world, i.e. with the internationals, as well as with the Albanians themselves.¹⁵⁶⁹

¹⁵⁶⁹ On the role of Esat Pasha Toptani in the Shkodra crisis and his efforts for various political and diplomatic alliances see: Poincaré, Reymond: “*Lufta e Parë dhe e Dytë Ballkanike si dhe Konferenca e Londrës 1912-1913*” (“*The First and Second Balkan Wars and the London Conference 1912-1913*”), Tirana; Puto, Arben: “*Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912-1914*” (“*Albania’s Independence and the diplomacy of the Great Powers 1912-1914*”), Tiranë, 2012,

Esat Pasha Toptani, appeared “on stage” as an “Albanian autonomous factor” the moment the commander of the Shkodra garrison, Hasan Riza Pasha, was killed. It is said that he could have been involved in the murder, as he was determined not to hand over Shkodra together with the Albanian defenders, whose defense was also in the interest of Austria-Hungary, which was fighting for it to remain in Albania. As long as it would not capitulate and be protected by Albanians and not by medieval ghosts, it confirmed the thesis that it was an Albanian country and not an imaginary Montenegrin capital. Realizing that Montenegro, aided by Serbian forces, had no intention of ending the Shkodra blockade and thus the Conference was in danger of losing its authority to become an instrument of Serbian-Montenegrin intentions, Austria-Hungary threatened Russia that if Montenegro and Serbia would continued the fight against Shkodra, then its troops would march towards Sanjak to northern Albania and Kosova, in order to secure the protection of Albanians from Serb-Montenegrin attacks.¹⁵⁷⁰

Frightened by the Austro-Hungarian threat and the consequences it could have for everything that had been achieved so far at the Conference for the benefit of its Slavic allies, Russia accepted a naval demonstration of the fleet of European powers off the Montenegrin coast. On April 5, the international naval team, under the command of British Deputy Admiral Sir Cecil Burney, arrived near Tivar and after a few days blocked the sea from Tivar to the Drini Gorge. Even after this naval demonstration, the Montenegrins refused to unblock Shkodra. But after Austria-Hungary put its forces in a state of war and was ready to send them to Sanjak, Serbia agreed to withdraw its troops and did so on April 12. Without the Serbian forces, it was clear that the Montenegrin army was unable to take Shkodra. But to do so, it chose Esat Pasha Toptani and his ambitions to become Albania’s “king” according to the Serb-Russian calculation, which decided to enter into an agreement with the Entente countries to hand over the city to them.

It was previously reported that Toptani had sought to contact representatives of the Tripartite League, but had been rejected on the grounds that he could not be trusted as he had already entered into a game with the Serbs and Russians. To remain “important” and in play, Toptani, on April 22, 1913, signed an agreement with the Montenegrins for the surrender of the city. Together with the Ottoman troops and the Albanian defenders, as well as with the ammunition he had with him, he left in the direction of Central Albania, where he declared his own feud and from there continued to work for his own interests, regardless of how much and how he harmed its cause.¹⁵⁷¹

After seven months of fighting, the Montenegrin army entered Shkodra and began celebrating its “historic victory”, which cost the city many victims by the Montenegrin military regime, especially to the patriots and citizens of Shkodra. On April 28, as expected, without the consent of the Great Powers, Vienna reacted with the threat that if Montenegro did not withdraw its invading troops from Shkodra within a week, Austria-Hungary and Italy would act militarily in order to put the whole of Albania under surveillance. A similar threat was made to the Ottoman Empire, which, after signing a peace treaty with the Balkan countries on April 19 and virtually renouncing any ties with Albania, had to stop interfering in Albania’s affairs and to quickly withdraw troops from there.¹⁵⁷²

The Austro-Hungarian threat, as well as its preparations with Italy to march throughout Albania, seriously worried Russia, which saw it clearly that the outbreak of a new war with the Trilateral League was on the verge and she did not want that. But it will also worry France and Britain, which urged Russia to take immediate action to calm the situation. Thus, two

pp. 444, 479; Wilhem zu Wied: “*Dektschrift über Albanien*” at Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Nga Shqipëria Osmane te Shqipëria Europiane*”, Prishtinë, 2010, pp. 543-574; Guy, Nicola: “*Lindja e Shqipërisë*”, Tiranë, 2012, pp. 122-133.

¹⁵⁷⁰ See: “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, vol. III, Tiranë, 2007, p. 36.

¹⁵⁷¹ Idem.

¹⁵⁷² For more see: Poincare, Reymond: “*Lufta e Parë dhe e Dytë Ballkanike si dhe Konferenca e Londrës 1912-1913*”, Tiranë, pp. 432, 469, 472, and 474.

days before the Vienna ultimatum passed, Russia forced Montenegro to accept the withdrawal of its troops from Shkodra and do so publicly.¹⁵⁷³

The Montenegrin army left Shkodra on May 14, 1913, after a three-week stay, after looting everything of value and burning the old bazaar. International powers entered the city. The city administration passed into the hands of a military commission headed by Cecil Burney and made up of naval officers who had blocked the coast. The international commission did not allow the Albanian flag to be raised in Shkodra and did not respect the Government of Vlora. A cantonal administration was established in the city,¹⁵⁷⁴ opening the door to the practice of occasional international interventions in Albania. But, as will be seen, the northern city, led by the International Control Commission, will be spared the hardships that other parts of Albania faced until World War I began.

The international intervention in Shkodra to end the Montenegrin occupation marks the first military demonstration of the West on the side of the Albanians in conflict with the Montenegrins.

But Shkodra and its pulling back from foreign occupation (in this case Montenegrin) will not be repeated in Janina. It also had almost the same scenario of eruption and aggravation, though the actors and roles changed as well as the interests of the Great Powers were different. It was about the same issue, namely the protection of an Albanian city, but now in the South of the country, where the Ottoman forces, in addition to the defenders who had long been involved in fighting, with the help of other volunteers joining after a decision by the Government of Vlora of January 28, 1913.

This decision, however, was debatable both politically and militarily, and as a consequence Janina and other surrounding areas were by Greece rather “*by the right that it had waged a liberation war against the Ottoman occupiers*” than by as much as an ethnic right, which it did not have, as the population of Janina and other surrounding areas was mostly Albanian and this was not disputed even by its supporters.

Although the Greek claims to the South of Albania were known, however, the decision of the Government of Vlora to get involved in the war, even defensively on the side of the Ottoman Empire against Greece, immediately made it biased placing it inevitably on the side of the loser as the Ottoman Empire was in those moments, even though a few days before the same government would declare its neutrality in the war, limiting itself only to the necessary protection in the event that Albanians were threatened by the Balkan armies.

It goes without saying that the Government of Vlora, when making such a decision, had in mind the patriotic aspect of protecting its lands, although this rightly opens the dilemma as to how much it helped the preservation of the Albanian territories, specifically Janina and part of The Gulf of Preveza by participating with the Ottoman army, instead of choosing any other strategy?

Aside from patriotic reasons, which in such circumstances justify many things, although they were of no help at all, others reasons appear unstable.

If the attitudes of the Government of Vlora about participating in the war on the part of the Ottoman forces to protect Janina and other Albanian areas in the South appear questionable, not morally but as to the consequences, however, the issue of Kosovo and its protection, brought the government of Vlora before accomplished acts, because nothing could help its liberation from the Serbian invasions and the tragedy that it brought.

Although Kosovo and its defense will fail to turn into an all-encompassing Albanian front in the making of Albania, it will nevertheless, in political and diplomatic terms, at the Conference of Ambassadors in London, turn into an open battle, on the one hand, between “historical right” which had been conjured up by Serbs for a long time and used to present it “*as a return to the medieval Serbian spiritual cradle*”, and on the other - ethnic right, as a

¹⁵⁷³ Idem.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Idem, p. 375.

vital right that Albanians possessed. So, in London, the first issue (Serbian “historical right”) was defended by the Russians. While the latter, (Albanian ethnic right), more or less, was defended by the Austro-Hungarians. They hinted that they were not in favor of an absolute implementation of this principle, as it was the result of the Balkan Alliance’s war against the Ottoman Empire, which emerged as facts were accomplished by force, which could not be ignored one hundred percent.

The Vienna representative in London stated at the end of December that “*lands entirely inhabited by an Albanian population should not be separated from Albania*”, while the provinces where Albanians constituted the majority of the population, could be subject to compromise between the Great Powers and could be used to meet the aspirations of neighboring states. Therefore, it was natural for the recognition of Albania to be expected on this compromise.

These attitudes extremely polarized Austria-Hungary with Russia, when on these principles their proposal-maps about the borders of Albania appear. Because, on the one hand, it will be the ethnic principle that will largely guide the position of Vienna and Albania was proposed to include nearly most of the territories where the population constituted the majority (except for a part of Central and Eastern Kosovo, leaving, however, Prishtina and Shkup (Skopje) out of the Albanian state), which Austria-Hungary defended from the beginning. And, on the other hand, Russia appeared with the position that Albania, without Kosovo and other areas in Macedonia, be limited to a small principality without any chance of survival.

The Austro-Hungarian map presented to the Conference was a project for discussion, which from the point of view of Albanian interests, appeared optimal. Thus, the northern border line ran along the Buna, following the old direction of Montenegro’s border with the Ottoman Empire to near Rrzhanica, and from there continued in a semicircle and, passing south of Gucia and Plava, took a nearby route of Peja, Gjakova, Prizren that were included in Albania. From Prizren the border descended to the South reaching the mountains between Lake Ohri and Lake Prespa, including the cities of Dibra and Ohri within Albanian lands. Further south and southeast, the border left Korça and Janina on the Albanian side and eventually followed the Kalamas River line to the Ionian Sea, south of the island of Corfu.¹⁵⁷⁵

Relying on the “*historical right*” conjured up by Serbian historiography and the Russian-Serbian Orthodox Church and on the grounds that it was a “*Serbian medieval center*”, where Serbian kings and Serbian ecclesiastical history originated and with similar slogans long ago fabricated by Serbian hegemony, as expected, Russia came up with the proposal that Kosovo and Macedonia should belong to Serbia. As the border line in the North crossed the Adriatic Sea near the Drin River, it headed east to the confluence of the White Drin with the Black Drin and from there, along the Black Drin stream, to Lake Ohri. The border then crossed to the South and turned west to the Ionian Sea at Cape Qafali, leaving Korça, Delvina, and Saranda outside Albania. Compared to the Austro-Hungarian map, viewed from the Albanian interest, the Russian map appeared minimal.

There was also a third map, that of the Balkan countries, which shrank Albania to the size of a narrow coastal province, without Lezha, reaching as far as Vlora.

The fourth map was that of the Government of Vlora, which included all ethnic Albanian lands in it and reasoned on this principle appearing maximal. This map was not considered at all at the Conference.¹⁵⁷⁶

The history of the maps presented to the Conference of Ambassadors in London with one of them, as announced on July 29, 1913, becoming official, in fact, highlights the history of the birth of the Albanian state cut by scissors on the green table of the Great Powers, along

¹⁵⁷⁵ Puto, Arben: “*Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe Diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912-1914*” (“*Albania's Independence and the Diplomacy of the Great Powers 1912-1914*”), Tiranë, 2012, p. 241; See: Guy, Nicola: “*Lindja e Shqipërisë*”, Tiranë, 2012, pp. 53-59; “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Vol. III. Tiranë, 2007, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷⁶ See: Puto, Arben: “*Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe Diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912-1914*”, Tiranë, 2012, pp. 291-297.

with all that contributed for it to come out as cut in half, not forgetting the possibility that if it weren't for its supporters, such as Austria-Hungary helped by Italy and Germany, it could have been wiped out altogether. Meanwhile, the Albanian issue remained unresolved, as a great potential for crisis, which, as it will be seen, will continue to be part of the Balkan upheavals to come to our time, as the Great European Powers, despite the fact that they recognized Albania as a state in the recognized dimensions, this will not be done on the principles of ethnic and living right, but rather on those of "*historical right*".

Based on these principles, and especially on the "*right to the spoils of war*", Serbia will be granted Kosovo and a good part of Macedonia. The same happened in the case of Janina and other Albanian areas in the south, without ever thinking why exactly on these "principles" the ethnic Albanian population was left outside the borders of the Albanian state, in the Northwest and South, although in many parts in majority, turning it into a minority.

However, the new situation, which led to the occupation and its justification by the Conference of Ambassadors in London, was not accepted by the Albanians remaining under Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek occupation. Albanian patriots, mainly from Kosovo, who had led the great uprisings of Kosovo in 1908 when they brought the Young Turks to power and in 1911 and in the summer of 1912 rose up against them forcing the Sublime Porte by the Shkup Memorandum of 14 points on July 24 to accept their demands, learning from the tragic suffering they had from the frivolity of their actions by which they had dispersed the popular uprising, emptying an accumulation of energy when it should not have happened, will try another Kosovo uprising. But now against the invading Serbian and Montenegrin forces, which after the July decisions of the London Conference in order not to accept the "title-deeds" of Kosovo.

It was a rather desperate and risky endeavor than a promise of success. Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Isa Boletini, and others from the National Movement, after the Conference of Ambassadors in London made its known decisions, gathered in some parts of Albania to organize an uprising. They counted on those who had already been forced to leave the lands, but also on the Albanian volunteers inside and outside the country, especially those who had remained in their lands and had many reasons not to accept the new invader. They will not accept the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors, but at the same time they will not respect the obligations of the Government of Vlora to remain neutral to any military action outside the borders accepted by the great European powers.

In order not to create the impression of involvement in the Kosovo Uprising, the Government of Vlora, in September 1913, appointed Hasan Prishtina Minister, although another conviction could be created that Ismail Qemali had done this deliberately to, at least from the inside, give some legitimacy to the irredentist movement. However, the Vienna government will also be interested in the Kosovo Uprising, which will indirectly provide support to Kosovars, as the uprising in the Albanian-occupied areas of Serbia would weaken Belgrade's position set to support irredentist movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were becoming increasingly militant against the Austrian presence in the country, and as will be clear a year later, with the assassination by Serbian nationalists of Prince Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, opening the way for World War I, which began with Austria's entry into war with Serbia.¹⁵⁷⁷

It is likely that Serbia was also interested in this uprising. Some archival sources even say that some of its agents infiltrated the ranks of the Albanian insurgents distributing money and weapons in parts of Dibra and Gjakova and being tasked by Belgrade as to which areas must be involved in the uprising. Because, evidently, Serbia needed a reason to achieving three goals at once:

First - to use the uprising of the population of Kosovo and the regions of Macedonia, which it had already won in London, with another terror against the rest of the Albanian part,

¹⁵⁷⁷ Idem, p. 48.

which it would now commit in the name of protecting its own state space, to provoke a wave of their displacement towards Albania, by which the occupied territories would continue to be ethnically cleansed to the extent that they were ready for rapid colonization as provided by Belgrade;

Second, it aimed to correct and supplement the legitimate invasions with some other strategic points towards Albania, which would be declared “security zones”;

Third - to overthrow the Government of Vlora and instead bring Esat Pasha Toptani, with whom it had very good relations and it seemed that some accounts had been made with him, although in the meantime he would have entered the Government of Vlora as defense minister, precisely to prevent the tricks.

Regardless of the accounts of who was most in favor and who put its fingers in it for certain purposes, the uprising of the Albanians against the invading Serbian forces appeared as a fair response to the state of occupation, which should not be accepted at all. As such, it started in the second half of September in Dibra, then continued in Struga and Ohri to spread to Tetova and in the direction of Kosova, including Prizren and Gjakova.

Of course, Serbia, after some initial losses, which seemed to be calculated, which it used for internal nationalist mobilization of large proportions, will soon recover and in early October began a large-scale counterattack in three directions with reinforced units and numerous armaments. It will also include large caliber cannons, ruthlessly bombing and destroying settlements from the Macedonian Polog to the extreme parts of Dukagjin, causing a great deal of terror to certain points and much wilder than a year before, when they fighting the Turkish forces. After a while, the Serbian troops entered the interior of Albania in the direction of Tirana and Durrës, given reason to suspicions that she had such a cause had been expected.

After all this, Vienna emerged again, preventing Serbia from achieving what it sought after the bloody extinction of the Macedonian and Kosovo uprisings. On October 18, Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold, for the second time in six months, sent an ultimatum to Belgrade to withdraw its troops from Albania within eight days or face war with Austria-Hungary.¹⁵⁷⁸

Advised by France and Russia, Serbia quickly withdrew military forces from Albania, but they continued to strengthen its position in Kosovo to terrorize the defenseless population. Now they could do so without any difficulty and risk of facing the ultimatums of Vienna, as they had the “title-deeds” of the London Conference of Ambassadors at hand, which it could use as pretext for war whenever they wished in the name of defending state sovereignty and integrity from Albanian separatist forces.

However, Kosova’s leaders who led the uprising remained in Albania drawing up other plans for an uprising against the Serbian and Montenegrin occupiers.

ARMED RESISTANCE AGAINST INVASION AND REOCCUPATION

The occupation of Kosovo (this also means the Albanian parts of Macedonia from Shkup, Tetova, Dibra to Manastir) by the armies of Montenegro and Serbia in December 1912, as well as the occupation of parts of southern Albania by Greece (Janina and Chameria), were part of the agreements between the Slavo-Orthodox states of the Balkans during their alliances to finally extinguish the Albanian issue through occupation and partitioning of their ethnic space. Although this seemed politically impossible - since, as is well known, Albanians and Albania, for a large part of the great European powers (Austria-Hungary and Italy, but

¹⁵⁷⁸ See: Poincare, Raymond: “*Lufta e Parë dhe e Dytë Ballkanike si dhe Konferenca e Londrës 1912-1913*” (“*The First and Second Balkan Wars and the London Conference 1912-1913*”), Shkup-Tiranë-Prishtinë, 2009, pp. 472-476.

also for Great Britain) had become a factor with which it was calculated to stop Slavic-Orthodox hegemony in the Balkans and with it the expansion of Russia's sphere of influence in this highly strategic part - however, the Balkan states sought to bring politics to accomplished acts through war, which had to be taken into account, if not in their entirety, then for the Albanians and their space to be turned into coins of exchange, so that in time, as an issue, it lost its importance, or disappearing altogether.

Thus, in addition to exploiting the war with the Ottoman forces on the front lines, i.e. those that were presented as borders between the Balkan states (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece) to make a way into the parts that "should have been liberated from Ottoman occupation", the armies of these countries had detailed instructions on how to act in order to destroy the Albanian ethnicity as much as possible. As it was only natural for the Albanians to resist the occupying armies, and also to prevent them from exercising terror against the defenseless population, the occupying armies had to act mercilessly and do so under the pretext of fighting the "pro-Turk armed resistance".¹⁵⁷⁹ For more, in accordance with this purpose, the military commands carried with them the "special units", which had to deal with "selective genocide" against the Albanian population. This is also revealed by a part of the Serbian press of the time, quoting the newspaper "*Reich Post*", indicating that over 2,500 Albanians were killed in the part of Gjakova and the surrounding area.¹⁵⁸⁰

The "Times" also reported on the massacre and others that were committed during those days, announcing that in the city of Gjakova the army and the authorities had executed 300 people.¹⁵⁸¹

Similar alarming reports came from the province of Luma, where the Serbian army massacred hundreds of residents of this part even after some Albanians had surrendered their weapons. It is about the brutal shooting of over 500 people and the mistreatment of their families, who were forced to flee to the mountains.¹⁵⁸²

In these circumstances the emergence of the first administrative bodies of the occupying regime occurred. They were established and operated based on those in Serbia, in counties, districts, and municipalities, in the first months of 1913 pursuant to decree No. 18714 of 5 November 1912.¹⁵⁸³

Obviously, these rulings and decrees, such as the one "On the Regulation of the Liberated Provinces", were based on the "*Law on the Unification of Old Serbia, Kingdom of Serbia and its Government*"¹⁵⁸⁴

Pursuant to these laws, two swift actions were taken: the disarmament of the population and the census of the population by the military authorities in Kosovo and Macedonia,¹⁵⁸⁵ actions with dire consequences for Albanians.

Disarmament of the Albanian population, which was done under the pretext that hidden weapons would be used "with the mountains blossoming",¹⁵⁸⁶ was part of the organized state terror against the Albanian population. It was done with military means and justified by "measures to normalize life" and "elimination of factors hindering it". On this occasion, the Serbian military used brutal methods, not only to demonstrate force, but also to use ways of humiliating and insulting human dignity, after which Albanians will be forced to take up arms

¹⁵⁷⁹ See the order of the 1st Sumadija Division to the operational unit in the Prizren area in "*Prvi Balkanski rat 1912-1913*" "*The First Balkan War 1912-1913*"), Book II, p. 261; Hrabak, Bogumil: "*Albanski ustanak 1912 godine*" ("Albanian Uprising of 1912"), p. 207.

¹⁵⁸⁰ "*Srbske Novine*", on 10. 01. 1913.

¹⁵⁸¹ Rushiti, Limon: "*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*", Prishtinë, 1981, p. 11.

¹⁵⁸² "*Radničke Novine*", Beograd, 22. 02. 1913.

¹⁵⁸³ Rushiti, Limon: "*Lëvizja kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*", Prishtinë, 1981, p. 13.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Guzina, Ružica: "*Opština u Srbiji 1839-1918*", Beograd, 1976, p. 447.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Idem, p. 447.

¹⁵⁸⁶ "*Archive of the Belgrade Historical Military Institute*", report of the General Staff, box-53, p. 2, no. 2/23, and Rushiti, Limon: "*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*", Prishtinë, 1981, p. 12.

to seek revenge or be displaced in the direction of Turkey, or move out in the direction of Albania. After initial operations, large-scale military campaigns followed. Villages and surrounding areas were besieged to be cleansed of “Albanian insurgents”. In the village of Nishor in Suhareka, on February 19, 1913, on the grounds that “insurgents were wanted”, all 42 adult men were killed. They were shot in the eyes of their children and women, “as punishment” for allegedly injuring a Serbian soldier, even though the villagers said that none of them had fired at the soldiers. Their entire property had been looted, and Nishor village, which had about 60 houses, was razed to the ground.¹⁵⁸⁷

Under the same pretexts and on the same way in the village of Kabash of Prizren, from March 19 to April 1, 1913, the Serbian army killed 17 people, 8 in Korisha, 1 in Lubizhdë, and 1 in Lutogllava.¹⁵⁸⁸ Local sources claimed twice as many were killed.¹⁵⁸⁹

The order issued for general census was also part of this scenario, as it was made by the military authorities in Kosovo and Macedonia and was followed by military methods, accompanied with violence. The census did not have a civilian, but rather military or strategic character for Serbia, as the military and civilian regime, while collecting data on the population, also created “alibis” on two anti-Albanian actions: on the one hand, declaring as “enemies” of all those who, for reasons of terror, were in hiding, and this could already be done in accordance with the law “on the capture and liquidation of outlaws”, and on the other hand to prevent the return of displaced persons in other parts under the peace treaty that would binding it to the Ottoman Empire in April 1913, in which case, formally, Belgrade vowed it would allow in all those who returned by April 1, 1915.¹⁵⁹⁰

By this decree, according to which as “outlaws” could be declared over five people gathering in the evening in a single place, the military regime began to intervene in the usual parties of people in the villages or even on their holidays. Under this law, the military had the right to kill without a court order. Suffice it to say that it was about “outlaws” or “enemies” and the case was closed.¹⁵⁹¹

In accordance with this practice, which had taken on disturbing proportions, the Deputy Mayor of the District of Kosovo by act No. 7260 of October 21, 1913, declared as “outlaws” all Albanians who were not at their homes and who did not report before the government. The same, in order to disrupt the “normalcy” of the life of Albanians, even where efforts were made to be patient, proposed the relocation of “insurgent” families to Serbian villages in the Mitrovica district, while in their homes Serbs brought from Serbian villages would be accommodated, in which case they would enjoy the right to own land without restriction, provided they were able to work.¹⁵⁹²

Despite these drastic measures by the Serbian and Montenegrin occupying powers, which continued throughout the Conference of Ambassadors in London, but which intensified after its end when Serbia justified the occupation of Kosovo (along with the Albanian territories in Macedonia), apart from the classic military occupation, neither Serbia nor Montenegro were able to put any civilian government into action in the occupied territories. On the contrary, the appointment of the *Nachelniks* to the districts was usually a farce of military power, which hastened to carry out its duties in order to bring the International Border Commission, appointed by the London Conference, before accomplished acts, so as to determine the boundary exactly as Serbian and Montenegrin demanded, and also Greek ones in the South, to the benefit of these countries.

This was the time of a broad movement of resistance against the establishment of any Serbian government, through individual actions, and also through establishing of groups in

¹⁵⁸⁷ “*Archive of the Belgrade Historical Military Institute*“, box-53, p. 2, no. 2/23.

¹⁵⁸⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1929*”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 12.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Guzina, Ružica: “*Opština u Srbiji 1839-1918*“, Beograd, 1976, p. 448, and “*Uredba o javnoj bezbednosti u oslobođenim oblastima*“, Beograd, 1913.

¹⁵⁹¹ *Idem*.

¹⁵⁹² *Idem*.

different parts, although it is about resistance without any internal connection and leadership center, as most of the leaders of the Albanian National Movement, who had organized defense during the occupation war of the neighboring countries against the Ottoman Empire, were in exile in Serbia or separated from the rest of the country. Even as such, the resistance made it difficult for the occupier to plan to install its civil administration and thus create the conditions for a rapid colonization of Kosovo.

In addition to the internal factor, the establishment of the occupying administration and the creation of circumstances for the colonization of the occupied Albanian territories in Kosovo and Polog were somewhat hindered because of Belgrade's escalating relations with Austria-Hungary, on the eve of the First World War, exacerbated by the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Serbia had activated the Serbs there to destabilize the country in line with the already well-known position that they should join Serbia.

Of course, in these turbulent circumstances as the world was facing a new crisis, as a consequence of unfair decisions by the London Conference of Ambassadors, which, although it had met a large part of the demands of the Slavo-Orthodox countries (Russia's allies), had set the ticking of the big bomb of Bosnia and Herzegovina, waiting to explode. Belgrade will be careful not to destroy all the bridges on the part of the Great Powers that it took as allies, which also had decided for a semi-autonomous Albania, but also because of the reaction of the public opinion, their critics would not approve of the rest of the Albanians remaining under Serbia, Montenegro or Greece being subjected to a ruthless extermination, as these countries had anticipated.

After the outbreak of the First World War, when Austria-Hungary was about to go to war with Serbia, while Germany would do the same, creating the Axis, on the other hand Great Britain, France and Russia would create the Entente bloc. Thus, in the face of another situation in which relations may change, Belgrade not only reduced military pressure on Albanians, but also took action to find allies among them, from the ranks of the feudal lords, with whom it had good relations, or appointing joint governing and administrative councils in districts and cities, where the former leaders took much of the powers they had during Ottoman times.

In this regard, Serbia succeeded in its concept of opposing the presence of Austro-Hungarian forces, which entered Kosovo in 1916, after breaking the Serbian army, which through Albania, had fled to Corfu, to introduce a good part of the Albanian *Kaçak* Movement, including Azem Bejta and others, who together with the Serbian Chetniks fought the Austro-Hungarian presence in Kosovo, even though it had removed the Serbian occupier and the Albanians, in the part it supervised, on the basis of an internal autonomy, had returned many of their national rights: administration in the Albanian language, education in the Albanian language, property rights and others.¹⁵⁹³

However, in September 1918, when it was announced that Bulgaria would capitulate soon (the act of capitulation was signed on September 29), the Serbian government turned to the Albanians, mainly those with whom it had previously had ties calculating that through them it would be able to instrumentalize the Albanian cause for its own needs in order to gain the role of its main supervisor.

Esat Pasha Toptani, this time too, appeared inevitable. Since he and his 5,000-strong force, two years before, fled to Durrës before the Austro-Hungarian forces and joined the Entente forces, Serbia had rushed to take over the funding of Toptan's army in recent months, which Belgrade called "The Allied Army of the Albanian State".¹⁵⁹⁴

The Serbian account was well measured. Because, by supporting Toptan's "Albanian army", not only did it retain the right to determine future benefits in Albania, but it also prevented any possible resistance by Albanians, which could be inflicted on Serbian forces

¹⁵⁹³ For more see: Abdyli, Tahir: "*Hasan Prishtina*", Prishtinë, 2004, p.; Rushiti, Limon: "*Lëvizja kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*", Prishtinë 1981, pp. 21, 22, and 205-217.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Idem.

once they entered Kosovo and other areas, after the French. From a proclamation in Serbian and Turkish (in Arabic letters) distributed to the population in Kumanova, Prishtina, Lebona, Kaçanik, Mitrovica, and Yeni Pazar districts, the Serbian government invited Albanians “to cooperate against the Bulgarian and Austro-Hungarian occupiers” promising that “we will become good friends again”, announcing that “your destiny depends on you”.¹⁵⁹⁵

Since it was the French army that would enter Kosovo, and the Serbian army units would follow suit, the Serbian government, however, had made all the necessary preparations to organize the Serbian government in the largest administrative centers, so that this time, the presence of the French army be used for this purpose. After the French army entered Kosovo in late September 1918, representatives of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs began appointing the *Nacelniks* in mid-October. The first to be appointed was Nerodima district mayor Marko Despotović, and mayors were appointed. At the same time, Zivko Popović was appointed *nacelnik* for the district of Gjilan. In October, police authorities were also assigned to Llap and Graçanica districts. Following the organization - appointment of the leaders of police authority in the Region of Kosovo - begins the organization of authority in the Region of Zvečan. The same will be done in the district of Vuçitërna, and Drenica. In the latter, Pop Angelko Nešić from Mitrovica was appointed a *nacelnik*, known for the violence exercised in this part by the Serbian army.¹⁵⁹⁶

In the Region of Prizren and that of Gjakova the situation appeared “different”, since there, after the capitulation of the Bulgarian army (September 29, 1918) until October 7, 1918 when the French army appeared, entering from the Tetova mountain road, for a week, power was taken over by the country’s leadership, made up of several local Albanians and Serbs. The mixed party had decided to keep both flags: Albanian and Serbian. An order was issued to end the hostilities, while one that had taken place (the murder of a Serb by an Albanian caught in a cafe for “political issues”) had ended with the hanging of the Albanian by a “trial jury”, headed by an Albanian. The Albanian “judge”, who had imposed the sentence for hanging the murderer of the Serbian ma, had come out with the Albanian flag to greet the French and Serbian soldiers, but he soon learned that the same occupier was returning, the one who three years ago was expelled by Austro-Hungarian forces, which had already lost the war.¹⁵⁹⁷

Organization of power in Gjakova was done according to the “model” of Prizren leadership. A delegation of the Gjakova leaders, composed of Albanians and Serbs, had gone to Prizren to the commander of the French troops to ask for help, so that the Montenegrin troops would not be allowed to organize a government there, as they had committed many crimes while they were there. Notably, the Gjakova “leadership” had been asked that they propagate the union with the Kingdom of Serbia if they wanted to get rid of the Montenegrin regime, which happened. In fact, some of them were tasked with collecting signatures to “prove the will of the Albanians to join Serbia”.¹⁵⁹⁸ Belgrade will later send these signatures as needed to the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁵⁹⁹

Despite these actions, with the formation of the mentioned authority, as temporary, with the help of the French army, the Serbian army, according to the agreement with its allies, had to immediately make its way in and make the deployment and distribution of troops throughout the country. Thus, the Serbian Supreme Command ordered the Timok Division to reconquer Kosovo. The Serbian army entered Kaçanik on 16 October 1918, Ferizaj on 18 October, and Lipjan on 19 October. Another Yugoslav division, formed on the Thessaloniki Front, entered Prishtina on October 20, from where its regiments headed for Peja and other

¹⁵⁹⁵ Hrabak, Bogumil – Janković, Dragoslav: “*Srbija, 1918*”, Beograd, 1968, pp. 180-181.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1929*”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 24.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Idem, p. 25.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Idem, p. 25.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Bajrami, Hakif: “*Si e riokupoi Serbia Kosovën më 1918*” (“*How Serbia reoccupied Kosovo in 1918*”), Book 2, Prishtinë, 2012, pp. 86-110.

parts of Kosovo, placing it under full supervision in October pursuant to the plan envisaged by the allied forces.¹⁶⁰⁰

During the deployment of military units, the bearers of various functions of the occupying authority were appointed, bringing with them the part of the apparatus, which had previously operated or served in Kosovo since 1913 onwards.

Initially, Belgrade remained loyal to the territorial division into districts, counties, and other units according to the 1913 division, extending to Has and Luma, parts that the Serbian army had occupied and kept under harsh military surveillance. Thus, Kosovo was divided into three regions: that of Kosovo, the district of Zvečan, and the district of Prizren.

The Kosovo district had the following counties: Nerodime (Ferizaj), Gjilan, Gračanica (Prishtina) and that of Llap (Podujeva).

The Zvečan district had the following counties: Mitrovica, Vuçiterna, and Drenica (Deviq).

The Prizren district had the following districts: Sharr (Prizren), Gora (Vranishta), Podgorica (Suhareka), Rahovec and Gjakova.¹⁶⁰¹

Two years later, Kosovo's territory was divided into 5 districts:

I. *The District of Zvečan*, based in Mitrovica, with Nacelnik M. Banić, had three counties, 25 municipalities with 302 settlements and 81,733 inhabitants. The following counties were part of the Zvečan District: Mitrovica with 8 municipalities, 130 settlements, with 16,107 inhabitants, and the county Nacelnik Karočić, with a settlement. The County of Vuçitërna with Mr. Mitić, 9 municipalities with 97 settlements and 32,405 inhabitants. The County of Drenica (headquarters in Llausha) with Nacelnik L. Marić with 7 municipalities, 75 settlements and 23,821 inhabitants.

II. *The District of Kosovo*, based in Prishtina with Mayor J. Krasojević, consisting of 55 municipalities with 506 settlements, and 251,821 inhabitants.

III. *The District of Metohija* (Dukagjin) based in Peja with Nacelnik R. Vasilević and 21 municipalities with 267 settlements and 92,156 inhabitants with the following counties: that of Gjakova with Nacelnik M. Marković, 7 municipalities with 97 settlements, and 27,800 inhabitants; of Istog with Nacelnik J. Samardžić, 6 municipalities, 70 settlements, and 18,947 inhabitants; County of Peja with Nacelnik L. Protić, with 7 municipalities, 99 settlements, and 30,900 inhabitants.

IV. *The District of Prizren*, with S. Todorović as its Nacelnik, 75 municipalities with 326 settlements, and 114,402 inhabitants. The following counties were included in this district: Gora (Vranishte) with Nacelnik Z. Jevtić, with 16 municipalities, 52 settlements, and 14,677 inhabitants; Luma (Bicaj) with Nacelnik S. Dajić, with 10 municipalities, 31 settlements, and 10,349 inhabitants; Podgora (Suhareka) with Nacelnik M. Parlić, 10 municipalities, 35 settlements, and 13,229 inhabitants; Podrimja (Rahovec) with Nacelnik M. Protić, with 15 municipalities, and 100 settlements, with 25,026 inhabitants; Prizren which formed a municipality with 16,370 inhabitants; Hasi (Krumë) with Nacelnik M. Stojanović, with 7 municipalities, 50 settlements, and 12,033 inhabitants.

V. *The District of Skopje*: which comprised of the territory of Kosovo of the Kačanik county with Nacelnik J. Djordjević, with 4 municipalities, 38 settlements, and 10,193 inhabitants.¹⁶⁰²

Evidently, the territory of Kosovo was divided into five districts with 18 counties, 180 municipalities, with 1,439 settlements and 549,871 inhabitants. Two districts were also included: Luma and Has, under the temporary occupation of the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-

¹⁶⁰⁰ Rushiti, Limon: "Lëvizja kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928", Prishtinë 1981, p. 26.

¹⁶⁰¹ Hrabak, Bogumil: "Reokupacija Srbske i Crnogorske države arbanaskom većinom stanovništva u jesen 1918, i držanje Arbanasa prema uspostavljenoj vlasti", in "Gjurmime Albanlogjike", no. 1, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 258.

¹⁶⁰² *Almanah Kraljevine SHS*, (Part One) 1921-22, Beograd, 1922, pp. 123-126.

Slovenia (SCS), with 17 municipalities, 81 settlements, and a population of 22,382 inhabitants.

This territorial division will not last long, as the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, united in a new state of South Slavs after the end of World War I, under the pressure of great Serbian hegemony, which had begun to show claims that the new state should turn into a Greater Serbia, changed the administrative division in accordance with its well-known projects for the Serbization of the occupied territories, especially the Albanian ones, by breaking the compactness of the peoples of the parts that made up an ethnicity. These administrative changes were prompted by the Vidovdan Constitution of June 18, 1921, which provided for a new administrative division of the provinces, in accordance with the aims of the Serbian bourgeoisie.¹⁶⁰³

According to the decree-law of April 22, 1922, the territory of Kosovo was divided between the following provinces:

1. The Province of Kosovo based in Prishtina, which included the following districts of the previous division: the District of Kosovo without the District of Gjilan, District of Prizren with all counties – excluding Luma and Has (territories of Albania), the District of Vuçitërnë, and territories from outside Kosovo joining were the districts of Toplica and Jablanica, which were part of the district of Vranje.

2. Province of Vranje included the district of Gjilan from Kosovo's territory.

3. The Province of Rascia, based in Cacak, included the District of Zvečan from the territory of Kosovo.

4. The Province of Zeta, based in Cetina, included from the territory of Kosovo the Dukagjin Region with all the districts that made it up before this division.

5. The Province of Skopje included the Kaçanik district from the territory of Kosovo.¹⁶⁰⁴

This territorial and administrative division remained in force until January 6, 1929, when the Dictatorship of January 6 and the SCS Kingdom was proclaimed.

This administrative division, which remained in force for seven years, was intended to divide the Albanian ethnic space between Serbia and Montenegro in accordance with the Serbia-Montenegro pact, concluded on the eve of the Balkan Wars and the invading schemes signed between these states to divide Albanian ethnicity. Dukagjin would be taken over by Montenegro, while the rest of Kosovo, along with Macedonia, would be taken over by Serbia.

Although the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia established after the end of World War I had swallowed up Montenegro along with its state and ecclesiastical identity, turning it into "Serbian internal affairs", nevertheless the chauvinist circles of Belgrade and Cetina maintained the agreement reached earlier, in order to divide the Albanian ethnicity of Kosovo into two parts, which was in accordance with the plans for the destruction of its core.

Thus, Dukagjin, by joining the province of Zeta, was completely detached from social, economic and political ties with the rest of Kosovo, which was also divided into three other parts. The district of Prishtina was taken over by the Albanian municipalities of Gjilan and Prizren and was joined by some parts of the Toplica region, these parts inhabited by Serbs, which were economically connected with Nis and other parts of Eastern Serbia. The same was true for Gjilan, which was attached to the province of Vranje, as was the case for the district of Zvečan (with Mitrovica, Vuçitërnë, and Drenica), which joined the province of Rascia, based in Cacak. As Skopje, formerly divided into a separate province including the towns of Polug Tetova, Dibra, Gostivar, and Bitola (Manastir), still held the Kaçanik district.

This administrative division presented the most appropriate scenario through administrative, economic and political methods to destroy the Albanian ethnicity of Kosovo and other Albanian territories left under the occupation of Belgrade. In addition to the administrative, economic, and political dispersal of Albanians in three directions (towards

¹⁶⁰³ Čukinović, Ferdo: "Jugoslavija između dva rata", Zagreb, 1961, p. 371.

¹⁶⁰⁴ "Službene Novine", no. 92, 28 April 1922.

Montenegro, Central Serbia, and Southern Serbia), which was also technically unaffordable for this population (lacking road infrastructure connecting Kosovo to these centers), the Belgrade regime had prepared the ground and infrastructure for bringing in settlers to Albanian lands, which will be done through the notorious laws on colonization and Agrarian Reform and for the creation of circumstances for the migration of Albanians to Turkey and other countries in accordance with conventions to be signed with Turkey for the “repatriation of the Muslim population”.

In 1929, after the proclamation of Vidovdan's dictatorship, there was a new territorial-administrative division of the Yugoslav Kingdom into 9 banovinas (provinces). The occupied Albanian territories of Kosovo and Macedonia were included in Banovina of Morava, Zeta, and Vardar. The Skopje and Manastir districts were included in the Vardar Banovina. While in that of Zeta was included the part of Dukagjin with the districts (Peja, Mitrovica). The Banovina of Morava included the district of Graçanica (with Prishtina and Podujeva) and Gjilan with Presheva connected to the district of Vranje.

In accordance with this administrative division and the goals to be pursued by it, was the territorial military division of Kosovo. After the invading wars of 1912, the Skopje-based Army II was stationed in Kosovo. This lasted until 1915. On August 19, 1919, by decree of Regent A. Karadjordjević, on behalf of King Petar I, and on the proposal of the Ministry of the Army, a decree was issued on military territorial division, the SCS Kingdom being divided into four military zones, 15 provincial divisions, 45 district regiments, and 180 district battalions.¹⁶⁰⁵

Kosovo was included in the 3rd Army Command in Skopje as part of the Kosovo Division. Whereas, the Kosovo Division, based in Prishtina, was divided into three divisions: the District of Prizren Regiment, the District of Prishtina, and the District of Novi Pazar.

The Novi Pazar Regiment District militarily linked Mitrovica, Vuçitërnë, Drenica, Istog, and Peja with Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin and other parts of Sanjak. From this point of view, the northwestern parts of Kosovo were separated from the center and connected with those of Sanjak, which, as will be seen, in the case of the law on disarmament and that on “outlaws”, will be exposed to savage military terror, which accelerated the declaration of a good part of these territories as “Muslim” in order to gain the right “for repatriation” to Turkey moving them out.

The rest, those who will not be subjected to “repatriation”, will be constantly targeted by military actions, undertaken in these parts under various “pretexts”, sometimes to capture “thieves”, sometimes to pursue “thugs” (although this movement had been present in these parts from where it operated), where the vulnerable population usually suffered, which “in the name of cleansing”, destroying their properties, houses, and the overall existential being consequently forcefully displacing the population.

THE KAÇAK MOVEMENT AND THE KOSOVO NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE

The Kaçak (Outlaw) movement is the first and most distinct form of Albanian national resistance to the invading Serbian and Montenegrin forces, which occupied Albanian lands during the Balkan Wars, and continuing against the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian forces, and resuming its activity even after the return of the Serbian occupier at the end of the First World War, in the autumn of 1918, continuing with different intensities for several years,

¹⁶⁰⁵ Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 30.

until the signing of the state convention between Yugoslavia and Albania in 1926, when this activity, with some exceptions, was extinguished altogether.

Until the appearance of the “Kosovo National Defense” Committee, this Movement, however, was mostly without any internal connection or without any leading center to link its activity with certain political goals, in accordance with international developments and especially those related to the further fate of the Albanians in the new circumstances when the relations of force would be mostly disturbed to their detriment. This was understandable, as it relied on a patriotic attitude of patriarchal factors (local feudal lords, tribes, and banners), willing to defend their homeland at any cost. But this was not enough in those circumstances when facing occupiers with organized armies and police, with states with diplomacy and institutions prepared beforehand for all kinds of actions and maneuvers.

The unpreparedness to behave in accordance with the very complex and even tragic circumstances that most of the Albanian people went through made it even more difficult for the resistance movement stemming from this patriarchal stratum that trusted the common state as the only salvation, when after the Paris Peace Conference, Albania as a state, was accepted in accordance with the decisions brought by the London Conference of Ambassadors in 1913. On that occasion, after its accession to the League of Nations (1921), it undertook to accept and ratify the borders with Yugoslavia, regardless of the fact that the territories separated from it (Kosovo and those of Macedonia) would be recognized to the new state, the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia (SCS).

In these circumstances, the state interest obliged Albania to stop any assistance to the Kaçak movement beyond the border, as it undertook the extinction of the Irredentist Movement within Albania, which was strong and very active in internal developments from the Congress of Lushnja onwards to continue as late as 1924, being unable to operate outside the state borders, especially in Kosovo where the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom had already begun the process of denationalizing the occupied territories through colonization, agrarian reform, and other administrative and political measures, implicating in the Albanian domestic political scene with fatal consequences. This led to its tragic end, while the Albanian relations became burdened by the curse of a division, opening the way for differences, turning even into social and political realities, unable to be softened even by the recesses of “unions”, as those during the First World War and from the beginning to the end of World War II.

However, national resistance against the new occupiers emerged from the time Serbian, Montenegrin, Greek, and Bulgarian armies invaded Albanian territory, with each beginning to establish its own occupying authority, claiming it would be permanent. The uprising of Dibra of 1913 is well known, which included a good part of the northeastern areas, which will be extinguished in blood, and consequently further penetrations of the Serbian invading army inside Albania followed. Also known are the actions of some armed groups in the part of Dukagjin, that of Drenica, and Karadak against the establishment of the first police-military bodies from the second half of 1913 onwards, frequent occurrences following the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London, once it became known that Kosovo and half of the Albanian ethnicity remained under the rule of the neighboring countries occupied during the last war.¹⁶⁰⁶

However, after the Conference of Ambassadors in London until World War I began, there is more talk of deliberate provocations by the invading armies against the defenseless population than of any organized movement, as will be shown later. These measures, however, include the decree on disarmament of the Albanian population and the law on recruitment, preceded by the census of the population by the military, which was violent and accompanied by various military provocations, including those affecting the dignity of the Albanian population.

¹⁶⁰⁶ See “*Historia e popullit shqiptar*”, Vol. III, Tiranë, 2007, pp. 461-469.

The beginning of the First World War and a year later the beginning of Serbia's losses in the war with the Axis powers (the Austro-Hungarian and German joined by Bulgaria and later Turkey), radically changed the situation in Kosovo. On the one hand, the Austro-Hungarians and the Germans appeared, expelling the Serbian and Montenegrin occupiers, recognizing the national rights of Albanians since self-government, education in their mother tongue and free economic activity, rights that in 1917 will go as far as accepting an Albanian autonomy, while on the other hand the Bulgarians appeared, starting off where the Serbian occupiers had left: through terror, violence, further denationalization. The recruitment of men to work on the Kërçova-Manastir road and forceful mobilization of Albanians, sent to various fronts of war, where many of them lost traces forever, was not ruled out, causing the uprisings against the Serbian occupiers turn against them.¹⁶⁰⁷

Faced with these "double realities", the Kaçak Movement and the armed resistance in general were confronted with the temptation to take a different stance, even though they were enemies of the Serbian occupiers, who actually had removed them, but behaved in different ways. This was true for the Bulgarians and for the areas they held, which, evidently, were not far from the Serbs as repression concerns. Therefore, it was reasonable for the first Kaçak detachments to appear in the Karadak part against the Bulgarian occupiers and their terror. It records the activity of Iliaz Reçaku's gang, and the names of Jetish Behluli, Rexhë Bardhi, and others.¹⁶⁰⁸

Since the Bulgarian area included a good part of Kosovo (the eastern part of Kosovo from Prishtina to Prizren, Shkup, and Pollog), this situation would be exploited by the Serbs for their own purposes, whereby the occupiers who had exercised so far so much military and police violence and terror against Albanians, that is, those who had been the cause of one of the greatest tragedies of all time against an entire people, appeared "friendly" demanding "a common and fraternal war against the German and Bulgarian invaders".

It is known that for this purpose, in January 1917, the commander of the Upper Jablanica unit, Milenko Vlahović, must have been seen in Prishtina in a meeting with Bajram Govori, whom he had promised material and weapons assistance in war against the Bulgarians provided that they interacted with each other. Serbian soldiers had infiltrated other parts of Kosovo as small groups of Albanian Kaçaks appeared to reach an agreement with them.¹⁶⁰⁹

Similar meetings and talks had also taken place in the Serbian parts occupied by the Bulgarians, such as in Kurshumlija and Prokupe, when some Albanian Kaçaks had taken part in numerous talks with the Serbian military leading the movement against the Bulgarians, from where a decision was reached for the Albanian Kaçaks to assist with Serbian weapons and other means, to liberate Prishtina, Mitrovica, and Peja, while Serbian units would act in the direction of Nis. It is also known that in March 1917 some Albanian Kaçak detachments took part in a battle in Kurshumlija against the Bulgarians.¹⁶¹⁰

This activity, continuing till the end of the First World War, however, placed a good part of the Kosovo Kaçaks indirectly in the position of allies for the Entente powers alongside Serbs and Montenegrins, as well as into main opponents of the Albanians. Esat Pasha Toptani, whose forces were directly involved in the Entente side from 1916 to the end, also took part in the operation, even taking part in the Thessaloniki Front.

A special chapter of this cooperation between the Albanian Kaçaks and the Serbian movement led by the Serbian military, which usually included the military reserve units of the resistance, was that of the war against the Austro-Hungarians, although it was known that they were the only ones who helped and supported Albania's declaration of independence. They also helped the London Conference accept Albania, even if halved, and that after the outbreak of World War I it was those who had driven out the Serbian and Montenegrin

¹⁶⁰⁷ Rushiti, Limon: "Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928", Prishtinë, 1981, p. 18.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Idem, p. 19.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Perović, Milivoje: "Toplički Ustanak", Beograd, 1959, pp. 103-109.

¹⁶¹⁰ Idem, pp. 112-113.

occupiers, the murderous military that massacred the Albanian population during the occupation of Kosovo and other Albanian areas and had made Albania, through that invading war, half, while its population, in the occupied parts, which the London Conference recognized to Belgrade, to be subjected to a violent ethnic cleansing.

Although the Austro-Hungarians during World War I, in the framework of their plans against the Serbian state and their hegemonic claims in the region, had set the Albanians free of the occupier restoring their national rights from education, administration, self-government, up to autonomy, which was announced a little later, a part of the Albanian Kaçaks, who operated in the area occupied by the Bulgarians, increasingly extended their activity in the Austro-Hungarian parts, i.e. where the Albanian leaders, from Hasan Prishtina and others, repeatedly called for alliances with the Austro-Hungarians, the Germans, and the fight against Serbia, rather than cooperating with them for their own purposes.¹⁶¹¹

Here, the active policy of Serbia will play a decisive role so that the Kaçak Movement of Albanians, which in the parts occupied by the Bulgarians was openly supported by them and almost to a large extent led by it, rise into action in the part held by Austro-Hungarians, in order to achieve two goals at once: firstly, the Kaçak Movement should not have a leading center in accordance with the positions of the Albanian National Movement, and secondly, that the Albanian Kaçaks fighting against the Austro-Hungarians should turn Albanians into enemies of the Axis powers and their most powerful supporters, being the only ones to offer further protection and guarantees to Albanians and Albania. Belgrade, along with others, not only did not guarantee anything, not only did they not present them on the side of the Entente, but they still made efforts to present the Albanians as conspiring enemies of the Entente forces and friends of the Axis powers, although this, as far as Kosovo is concerned, did not correspond to reality, as a good part of the Albanian Kaçaks did so under the supervision of Serbia.

Serbian influence on some Kaçak groups operating in the Drenica and Eastern Kosovo areas, based on Austro-Hungarian and Serbian data, including also French reports, increased from the spring 1918 until the appearance of the French army in September of that year, when it entered Kosovo followed by Serbian military units from the Thessaloniki Front, which were handed over Kosovo. The Albanian Kaçaks faced a tragic reality, as the Serbian occupation was now even stronger than before.

Although it cannot be said that the Albanian Kaçaks, who had rightly gone to the mountains against the Bulgarian occupiers, did so to restore the Serbian occupation, but on the contrary, so that they could get rid of the foreign occupation, regardless of where they came from. However, with or without it, in the end, many of them fell into the Serbian trap, remaining its tragic losers.

In fact, this trap had been inevitable when Azem Bejta, perhaps as no common national center existed, such as the “*National Defense of Kosovo*” Committee established in Shkodra in October 1918 after French and Serbian forces jointly entered Kosovo, although it was in the vortex of a war where the interests of the Great Powers were confronted, being already at war with each other and using all means and opportunities of different factors for their own benefit.

The various fronts of resistance and their Kaçak movements also played a major role here, i.e. detached and surrounded by invaders, it will turn to the “neighbors”, as was done during the last stage of the Albanian National Movement when a part of the Albanian feudal lords joined talks and accounts with Serbia and Montenegro, with the promise of “fraternal aid” and “joint liberation”, though soon realized the deception with serious consequences for them.¹⁶¹²

¹⁶¹¹ See: HHStA – Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv, Politisches Archiv, Wien: Albanien: III-XXXVIII (1878-1918), doc. no. 26/73; Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2004.

¹⁶¹² Idem.

With such promises, the Serbian Chetnik leader, Kosta Pecanac, had entered into talks with Azem Bejta, the most famous Albanian Kaçak, involved in the fight against the Axis forces. They met in the summer of 1918 somewhere in the village of Pridvorica in Kollashin, Iber, at the home of Olimpje Bozović. There was talk of a “joint war” against the “invaders”. Talks also continued in the village of Varage.¹⁶¹³ These and similar actions of the Drenica Kaçak, which had begun more than a year before, would not go unnoticed and without response by the Austro-Hungarians. Vienna declared Azem and his Kaçaks as enemies, against whom it entered into some fighting. The repressive measures of the Austro-Hungarians also affected his supporters in some parts of Drenica, in which case, “for security reasons”, some of them were exiled to Austria.¹⁶¹⁴

The enmity with the Austro-Hungarians and the cooperation with the Chetniks of Kosta Pecanac continued until the end in favor of the Serbs. Thus, at the end of the war, when a part of the Austro-Hungarian forces were withdrawing, at the place called “Përroni i keq”, they fell into an ambush by Albanian Kaçaks, and surrendered to Azem Bejta, convinced that they would be left free to withdraw, in accordance with an agreement they had reached with some of the leaders of the Albanian National Movement in Shkodra, whom the German-Austrians still saw as the only allies, regardless of fate of the war, going to their detriment.¹⁶¹⁵

But the captured prisoners, along with all the combat material, was handed over to the French army, which, after receiving the news, had arrived in Mitrovica taking custody of the Austrian-Hungarian officers and soldiers from the Albanian Kaçaks. French Commander Balshe, on this occasion, in honor of Azem Bejta and his merits in the war against the Austro-Hungarians, hosted a dinner, and issued an award of medals for war merit and presented a sword as a trophy.¹⁶¹⁶

Albanian Kaçaks and their leaders were soon convinced that the “friendship” and “joint liberation war” with the Serbs had come to an end and that it was being replaced by what had already been seen in these parts in the autumn and winter of 1912, when the invading Montenegrin and Serbian armies had appeared launching unprecedented military terror against the defenseless population.

Indeed, after the Serbian army took over the “liberated” areas from the French army and established the same military-civilian administration as the one broken in 1915 by Austro-Hungarian and German forces, it continued the old tune, but now a little more disguised, targeting those who did not surrender their weapons, that is, the Kaçaks, who until yesterday had supported them against the Bulgarians, and more so against the Austro-Hungarians. Meanwhile, Serbia lured some of the local leaders from the ranks of the leadership for cooperation by offering them posts of no relevance. Chetnik Chief Kosta Pecanac, who set forth to Shkodra from Peja, where he had mobilized many “masked” fighters, to “save it from the Italian occupation”, would send a message to the Albanian Kaçaks “to return to the fruits of peace” so that “they may cherish them together”.

As they did not stay long in Shkodra, because following the pressure by the Great Powers, which made a big deal out of the occupation of Shkodra issuing an ultimatum to let it free, Kosta Pecanac returned to Kosovo. But on his return from Shkodra, through Plava and Gucia, and Rugova to Peja, he terrorized the Albanian population, forcing them to seek “rescue” on routes to Shkodra, so that Kosovo could be emptied of them. This caused an

¹⁶¹³ Perović, Milivoje: „*Toplički Ustanak*“, Beograd, 1956, p. 356.

¹⁶¹⁴ Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*”, Prishtinë 1981, p. 57.

¹⁶¹⁵ More about the agreement of the leaders of the Albanian National Movement in Shkodra with the Austro-Hungarian Military Command in this city see in HHStA – Haus-Hof-und Staatsarchiv, Politisches Archiv, Wien: Albanien: III-XXXVIII (1878-1918), doc. no. 26/73.

¹⁶¹⁶ Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja Kaçake e Kosovës 1918-1928*” (“*The Kaçak Movement of Kosovo 1918-1928*”), Prishtinë, 1981, faqe 22 dhe Osmani, Jusuf : “*Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941*” (“*Colonization, agrarian reform and displacement of Albanians from Kosovo 1918-1941*”) III, Prishtinë, 2016 (See the discussion of the deputy Fehrat Ali Draga in the Yugoslav parliament, where he talks about A. Bejta’s connections with Kosta Peçanac and the fights he and his Kaçaks had against the Austro-Hungarian army, pp. 71-77).

uprising in the district of Peja (Rugova), in February 1919, though not an uprising, which was quickly used as excuse for a military operation, which resulted in the burning of numerous settlements by Rugova and as far as Plava and Gucia and murder of 83 people, with the rest fleeing to Shkodra.¹⁶¹⁷

For the difficult situation caused after the reconquest of Kosovo by Serbian military forces and especially by the Chetnik units of Kosta Pecanac, operating in the area Peja-Rugova-Plava-Gucia, forcing the residents of these areas to head towards Shkodra, i.e. exactly those forces that until yesterday had asked the Albanian Kaçaks “to fight fraternally the occupier” (Austro-Germans), the Committee “National Defense of Kosovo” reacted in a letter addressed to President Wilson (Wilson), asking to intervene as soon as possible so Belgrade stops its military terror. The letter announces that in Shkodra alone there were already over five thousand refugees, who were at the brink of starvation.¹⁶¹⁸

Of course, in these circumstances, it will be the leadership of the endangered population of Kosovo from various centers, who turned to the commander of the 3rd Army of the Kosovo Division for help. The Prizren delegation (of five), the Gjakova delegation and other border guards presented a lot of evidence of killings, raids, imprisonments, and persecutions by gendarmes, who acted on behalf of “the search for Austro-Hungarian collaborators”.

Perturbing for the population, there were two other measures: that of searching for weapons, followed by brutal measures, and mobilization for the army, which began in the summer of 1919, involving violently young people aged 20-25. To escape these measures, many young people took to the mountains and others tried to find shelter in Albania or elsewhere. This gave even more “reasons” to the newly established police and military bodies for mass persecution of the Albanian population. Under these circumstances, some of them sought to join the Kaçaks.¹⁶¹⁹

However, even though Azem Bejta[s Kaçak detachments and several others managed to survive this terror by operating from Albania to Kosovo and vice versa, they had already found it very difficult to act because the Belgrade military authorities had put them on the enemy lists (if they did not surrender their weapons) and had increased their presence in parts of Drenica and Llap, which for a time had been spared from their presence.

However, in the spring and summer of 1919, as the Paris Peace Conference continued in Paris and, following reports of increased military and police violence against the vulnerable population, the international community’s attention was focused on the behavior of Belgrade’s state authorities in Kosovo and other parts inhabited by Albanians, which had already been ceded to the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, additional efforts were marked by police-military bodies to contact the Kaçaks so that they would surrender. These actions took place in the part of Drenica and Llap and were dealing with Sadik Rama of Gjurgjevik and Azem Bejta, whose troops occasionally operated in these parts, whereas it was reported that they managed to capture entire units of gendarmes, as had happened in the municipality of Orllat.¹⁶²⁰

Reportedly, the Nacelnik of the Drenica district, in September of that year had called Azem Bejta to talks, as Ramë Vilasa with friends had been summoned by the Nacelnik of Podujeva, Cerović, who had been offered to hand over their weapons being promised

¹⁶¹⁷ See: “Populli i Plavës, Gusinjës dhe Rugovës muhaxhir në Shkodër”, (“People of Plava, Gusinja, and Rugova Muhajir in Shkodra”), published in the newspaper “Populli”, 25. 02. 1919, quoted by Rushiti, Limon: “Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 46.

¹⁶¹⁸ See: AQSH, i RPSH, fund, KMKK, dossier, 23/3, no. 708705, 28. 02. 1919, protests against the Yugoslav government’s actions against Albanians sent to US President Wilson, and: “Tragjedia e Kosovës, ç’vajtajnë gërmadhat e Rugovës” (“The tragedy of Kosovo, what are the ruins of Rugova mourning about”), published in the “Kosova” newspaper.

¹⁶¹⁹ Hrabak, Bogumil: “Jedan radikalski izveštaj o stanju na Kosovu 1921 godine”, in “Vjetari i Arkivit të Kosovës”, Prishtinë, IV-V (1968-169), and 1971, pp. 215, 217, 223.

¹⁶²⁰ Rushiti, Limon: “Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 56.

“chaushe’s” positions. Cerović met with Azem Bejta in Zhabar, Mitrovica, where other issues were discussed, but no agreement was reached between them.¹⁶²¹

Of course, the time for unilateral “agreements” that had worked in Belgrade’s favor, such as those for “joint war against the Austro-Hungarian occupiers”, had already passed, and the Serbs were the least interested in them. On the contrary, they were looking for a reason to continue the terror against the Albanian population, so that, by blaming them for further “feeding the insurgent movement” and “separatists”, they would be constantly pushed to move out of their own lands. This was already Belgrade’s official policy, and for this purpose various methods were used, with common denominators of setting the conditions for Albanians to first feel economically insecure, i.e. expropriated from land and other private property, and then feel provoked and in constant conflict with law and authority, whether when their young men had to mobilize and fled, or when they were required to hand over arms, or when ties to the Kaçak movement continued, for which anyone could be prosecuted and charged, although notably in the traditions of the Albanian family anyone who sought refuge was granted it.

In short, Albanians needed to be convinced that Kosovo and other Albanian areas remaining outside Albania’s borders were no longer Albanian, but rather “Serbian holy land”, “stolen and occupied by them during Ottoman rule”, which had been returned to its “medieval cradle”, which meant that to them it was foreign. The latter was done through military demonstration, but also through a great campaign undertaken by the state for Kosovo to gain the “appearance of Serbian sanctity”, building Orthodox monasteries in every locality so that Albanians would be subject to submitting to the circumstances, i.e. admitting that they stood “on Serbian soil”, or move to Turkey.

Under these circumstances, state terror through police and military means in Kosovo and other Albanian areas left to Belgrade continued in the name of “restoring order and law” and “fighting criminal gangs” as the Kaçaks were called. The latter continued to operate in various parts of Kosovo, although isolated and mostly with retaliatory actions against police and military units that exercised terror, and targeted Albanians who had begun to be included in the state apparatus or be appointed prefects, whom Belgrade usually elected from among the families with whom it had ties since the time of the Ottoman Empire. Some of these Albanians were already involved in the town authority and in municipal councils, being presented to foreign delegations visiting these parts or even diplomats, who moved through these parts to see the real situation, always by focusing on “protecting national minorities” and “protecting their property and religious rights”, which were in line with the League of Nations Charter, while Belgrade presented them with “an enemy” who fought “to destroy the newly established and internationally recognized state of the South Slavs” in order to join with another state - Albania.

Since at this time, after Albania’s accession to the League of Nations and its obligations to ratify all agreements with neighboring countries, primarily with Belgrade, Tirana had accepted the reality of the Paris Peace Conference, i.e. the existence of the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia as a state that already included Kosovo and other Albanian territories occupied by Belgrade and Podgorica during the Balkan Wars. At that time, the situation of the Albanian Kaçak Movement changed radically, as it had already been outlawed and was being prosecuted not only by Belgrade, but similarly in Albania. Thus, Albania as a state could only raise the issue of the freedoms and rights of the Albanian “minority” outside its borders, i.e. within the SCS Kingdom (although it was difficult to do so for formal reasons since in Kosovo and other parts of Albania “Turks” and “Muslims” were treated), which excluded the issue of national union, or issues related to an eventual liberation of Albanians from Belgrade. However, these ideas continued to be obsessed amongst the Kosovo Albanians, including

¹⁶²¹ Bajrami, Hakif: “Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë 1918-1941” (“Social and political circumstances in Kosovo 1918-1941”), Prishtinë, 1981, p. 101

those in the Polog of Western Macedonia and their movement, which still did not give up the common Albanian state.

On this occasion, Belgrade found permanent “causes” to exercise state terror through police and military means against Albanians, always arguing that Albanians did not accept the realities established by the Peace Conference and the League of Nations, and were acting on the contrary, to destroy it, which they condemned as double opponents. On this plain, the Kaçak Movement and its determination not to accept the Serbian occupation but to fight it by all means, regardless of the consequences, remained the most appropriate “weapon” to achieve anti-Albanian goals from those of destroying their ethnicity to those of setting the conditions for them to move out permanently.

This process which eventually continued on an open track, will flow in the direction set by Belgrade. In fact, there are many sources indicating that the Kaçak activity in Kosovo, of low intensity, despite the damage suffered by it (assassination of a gendarme, or a soldier), served Belgrade for the purposes set forth, with its government making constant efforts to infiltrate numerous collaborators within the Movement, who would toughen its stance and actions as needed, and above all, wherever the Movement was in danger of extinction. At that moment, the Serbian police and military services introduced masked “Kaçak” units, who acted by killing mayors from the ranks of Albanians and Belgrade’s “collaborators”, and these were then used to blame the real Kaçaks to be used as trigger for widespread revenge against the defenseless population.¹⁶²²

On this basis, many killings and assassinations took place during 1920/21, while the cleansing of entire Albanian villages was used to create most appropriate circumstances for the colonization of Kosovo and Western Macedonia with Serbs and other Slavic populations, to be placed in these parts in accordance with the laws on colonization and other measures that Belgrade anticipated for a two-way process: on the one hand to bring in and settle as many Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo and Western Macedonia as possible, while on the other hand, to move as many Albanians as possible from Kosovo and Western Macedonia, all of which had to “balance” the ethnic structure in Kosovo and Macedonia to the detriment of the Albanians and for the benefit of the Serbians.¹⁶²³

However, as Belgrade was using all state and diplomatic mechanisms to achieve the goals set for the Albanian population, such as its ethnic cleansing by means of war, while the Albanian state was in a very difficult situation because of multifaceted pressure from its neighbors, the national resistance in Kosovo was also facing a challenge of dissent from within turning into an open problem for the Albanian state itself.

The first issue, i.e. dissent from within, was almost a fact, since after the Peace Conference and its decisions, two groups emerged: that of the Kaçak movement in Kosovo and Western Macedonia, also scattered in many parts and without any internal connection and with only supervision, with the “*Kosovo National Defense*” Committee emerging, based in Shkodra and with “bases” in Kruma, Tropoja, and elsewhere in the North, which will be forced to submit to some external interests, such as the acceptance of Italy’s defensive role. Although from 1921 to 1923, the so-called Junik “*Free Zone*” and the surrounding area connecting these parts of Albania with Kosovo, and where one could freely enter and exit, however, from 1922 this will be complicated by the establishment of the border line and its supervision, by which official Tirana had been conditioned by the decisions of the Peace Conference but also by the League of Nations after being accepted and had to ratify the state agreements with Greece and the SCS Kingdom within a period of two years.¹⁶²⁴

¹⁶²² For more on this see: Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*”, Prishtinë, 1981; Obradović, Milovan: “*Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija Kosova 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë, 1981; Bajrami, Hakif: “*Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë, 1981; Abdyl, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2003.

¹⁶²³ See: Obradović, Milovan: “*Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija Kosova 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë, 1981.

¹⁶²⁴ See: Verli, Marenglen: “*Kosova sfida shqiptare në historinë e një shekulli*”, Tiranë, 2007, pp. 199-206.

This is where the second issue begins, that is, regarding Albania's obligations not to allow any irredentist movement inside and not to support the Kaçak movements in Kosovo and other Albanian areas held by Belgrade. It even had obligations, if necessary, to coordinate with Belgrade on their liquidation, as will happen later.¹⁶²⁵

From this point of view, the Albanian national resistance appeared as an Irredentist Movement within the Albanian state and as a Liberation Movement within the Yugoslav state. The first had a considerable intellectual and human potential, with about 20,000 militants that could be put into action, and this was viewed with great suspicion and distrust in Albania in the circumstances when it was in the vortex of internal turmoil, while the latter was located in Kosovo and Western Macedonia, with considerable potential for patriots, mainly from the feudal strata and the rural population, who were willing to sacrifice and fight. However, they faced a very prepared opponent with a powerful police-military apparatus, which was in mobile condition and in the name of fighting "terrorism" had the green light to settle accounts with anyone on the movement list.

So, in addition to the lack of internal connection and different political concepts, this movement had both the Albanian and Yugoslav state common opponents as well as the international factor. The first for acting on state logic, and the second, for acting in accordance to hegemonic concepts for the eradication of the Albanian cause. While the international factor was opposed because it confused the accounts in the bargains made at the expense of a people who demanded the right to live free and equal with others, but that this was not allowed by those who were actually called to create such relations

Be as it may, the Irredentist Movement in Albania, in its most organized form, emerged directly in the spring of 1918, when in Shkodra, some of the Albanian patriots from the ranks of the national movement of 1911/12, who had prepared the independence of the Albanian state in November 1912, but due to well-known circumstances were deprived of the act of proclamation and the content of the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, among them Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Hoxha Kadria, and others, announced their intentions to united with Albania by all means, including a liberation war. These attitudes and this spirit of Albanian patriots with many merits for national independence, was present, even earlier, but for its culmination at this time, the reasons must be sought in the latest developments related to the end of the First World War, knowing that the Great Powers, regardless of its direction, would hold a new conference to determine the new borders in the Balkans, suggesting that the creators of the irredentist movement were prepared to present the Albanian issue openly from every point of view, which should have been treated in its entirety and not by violent detachment, as had happened at the London Conference. In the face of these developments, as new cards were expected to be thrown into the game again, the Albanian factor was forced to come up with clear demands, which had to be in line with the right to their common state on the basis of ethnicity, a principle which had been useful during the establishment of other states in the Balkans in the space where for centuries the Ottoman Empire had exercised its power. But this time, for cover, they had the statement of 14 points of the American President Wilson, by means of which the Albanians also had the right to self-determination. On this occasion, it should be noted that their violent division, not only did not pacify the region, as it was claimed, but also made it even more insecure, as Albanians did not agree with the realities which they had also opposed by weapons.

Of course, in favor of this definition stood the nearly three-year Austro-Hungarian administration (1916-1918) of the territories occupied by Serbia in 1912 and a large part of Albania, which had restored the common national identity to the Albanian realities from administration, education to institutions, be they autonomous. The new situation had already created the preconditions for not allowing the return of the Serbian and Montenegrin occupation, although the London Conference had justified the occupation in terms of the state.

¹⁶²⁵ See: Milo, Paskal: "*Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918-1927*", Tiranë, 1992, pp. 147-151.

Thus, in Shkodra, an organizational structure of the movement began to be created, whereupon the patriot Kadri Prishtina (Hoxha Kadriu) was elected at its head, while members of the presidency, or its associates, at different times were Bedri Pejani, Rakip Kaja Begolli, Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Sali Nivica, Sejfi Vllamasi, Hysni Curri, Elez Isufi, Tafil Boletini, Sadik Rama, Azem Galica, Bajram Daklani, Murat Gjakova, Hasan Ferri, Qazim Bakalli, Beqir Vokshi, Nimon Ferizi, Ismail Haki Nikçi, et al.

Branches of the “Committee” began to be established in other northern and northeastern Albanian territories, especially in the part of Western Macedonia. A branch of the committee was also set up abroad, in Geneva, to protect ties with Albanian colonies abroad, giving the whole operation a comprehensive commitment so that the movement could emerge as a just cause for the protection of Albanian lands from Slavic reconquest. This right was justified by the new circumstances created by the First World War and the renunciation of the great European powers by the guarantees given to the Albanian state, which should also apply to other decisions taken at the Conference of Ambassadors in London of 1913.¹⁶²⁶

The leaders of the irredentist movement were convinced that both Vienna and Rome, although on opposite sides of the war fronts, in principle remained on defending positions of the Albanian space on ethnic grounds, which in a way had made it clear: Austro-Hungarians installed Albanian administrative autonomy in the territories they held, and Rome, even declaring autonomous Albania under Italian supervision, albeit outside Greek and French occupation. Thus, the concentration of Albanians should be based on these factors, not excluding direct agreements with these countries. It was important that the idea of the Albanian state, even if scattered, existed and it was not one-sided. Hasan Prishtina, one of the most distinguished members of the “Kosovo National Defense” Committee, rightly stated that *“the issue of protection of Albanian lands and their return to its trunk, was not only the duty of those who had lost the homeland from the invasions by the neighbors, but it was the duty of every Albanian who loved Albania”*.¹⁶²⁷

Hasan Prishtina also commemorated the blood that Kosovars shed during the defense of their lands in the war with the Serbian and Montenegrin invaders, as well as the blood they shed in defense of Prince Wied in Durrës and other parts of the Albanian kingdom, contested and fought by others, but more by the Albanians themselves, while pointing out the latter as a fratricidal war, which must not be repeated.¹⁶²⁸

Out of the emerging developments, not even the first obligation - that is, the fight for the protection of Kosovo and its return to the Albanian trunk to become the concern of all Albanians, will be fulfilled, nor will the risk of recurrence of the abrupt 1914 year will be exceeded, when the defense of the Albanian state turned into a fratricidal war on religious grounds.

In fact, both the first and second aspects of the Albanian stance towards the irredentist movement, will see it as an external aspect with internal impacts. The Paris Peace Conference, despite the problems it faced with the recognition of Albania on the borders of London - and this happened after more than two years of work - first recognized the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, which it soon became Yugoslavia, accepting Serbia in advance what the London Conference of Ambassadors had granted it in 1913. Thus, Serbia had no qualms about losing the Albanian territories it had occupied during the First Balkan War. On the contrary, after the end of the First World War, as an ally of the Entente, Belgrade received numerous rewards (the capture of Vojvodina, Backa, and Banat from Hungary), and hosted another Albanian part, which it already justified as demands “in the name of correcting state security by irredentist movements”.

¹⁶²⁶ See: Bajrami, Hakif: *“Si e riokupoi Serbia Kosovën më 1918”*, Prishtinë, 2012, pp. 201-205, and 326-329; Verli, Marengeln: *“Kosova – sfida shqiptare në historinë e një shekulli”* (“Kosovo - the Albanian challenge in the history of a century”), Tiranë, 2007, pp. 199-201; Abdyl, Tahir: *“Hasan Prishtina”*, Prishtinë, 2004, pp. 211-222.

¹⁶²⁷ See Hasan Prishtina: *“Nji shkurtim kujtimesh”*, Second Edition, Bari, 1925.

¹⁶²⁸ Idem.

The international stance towards Serbia and the same towards the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia, emerging as a common state of the South Slavs with the weight of a regional force from the very beginning, faced the Albanian state with accomplished facts, i.e. loss of Kosovo and other areas that London had left out of the Albanian state, while the Albanian national movement for unification, will be condemned “as internationally dangerous”. But not only that. The SCS Kingdom in its strategy to prevent the stabilization of the Albanian state, combine both external and internal pressures, used in a dosed manner, so as not to create any international crisis, as it endangered any unnecessary match with Italy, but rather keep Albania in check.

Although the representatives of the Durrës government in Paris emphasized the importance of the violently separated territories from the Albanian state for its survival, in fact they focused on the demand for the recognition of Albania in London and expressed satisfaction that this would be taken into account. The same was done by the government emerging from the Congress of Lushnja, that is, that of Tirana, with other similar ones, which within the next two years will replace one another mostly by force and under the direction of external states, especially the neighbors, who were not interested in stabilizing the Albanian state.

The irredentist movement for the liberation and unification of the Albanian lands that would be led by the “*Kosovo National Defense*” Committee, as a powerful potential, the more it will lose its “legitimacy” from abroad and the more it will lose the space of action in its territory, especially in the occupied territories as the war against the Serbian invaders narrowed in certain detached Kaçak groups, which would operate in the triangle between Drenica, Drin, and Dukagjin before they were completely extinguished.¹⁶²⁹ As such, it turned into an internal Albanian problem, to be reflected in its political scene, being involved in some developments, which in time, turned into a boomerang to be liquidated at all, as it happened before and after the coup d’état of June 1924. The “*Kosovo National Defense*” Committee sided with the Albanian “left”, against the “right”, although this division was more of a political nature rather than a real social relationship, with which it will seal its destiny in such a way that even if the left won, the end would be the same, but not through blood. Because, it was the logic of the state interest that determined its fate, whether it wanted to accept it or not.

Despite this development, the “*Kosovo National Defense*” Committee, based in Shkodra, was established in the circumstances when the First World War was entering its final phase, while in Kosovo and other Albanian areas the French forces had already entered, already engaged in handing them back to the Serbs, as it was expected that at an international conference to be held, the whole issue of the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London would be reconsidered in accordance with the new relations of forces that the outcome of the world war and the emerging interests brought to the surface. Therefore, Albanians demanded that the international decision-making factor give an answer in advance, especially about the fate of Kosovo and other areas detached from its trunk during the Balkan Wars by Serbs and Montenegrins. This demand should have been nothing more than to include the demand for a united Albanian state in accordance with their ethnic, historical, and living rights, as had others emerging from centuries of Ottoman captivity, a right that was already being strengthened with the declaration of self-determination of peoples by US President Wilson in 1918, which became a platform for resolving many issues arising after the First World War and after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the defeat of Germany, and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁶²⁹ For more on the Kaçak movement Kosovo see at Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1818-1928*”, Prishtinë, 1981; Haxhiu, Ajet: “*Shote dhe Azem Galica*”, Tiranë, 1976; Haxhiu, Ajet: “*Hasan Prishtina dhe lëvizja patriotike e Kosovës*”, Tiranë, 1964; Çami, A: “*Lufta çlirimtare antiimperialiste e popullit shqiptar 1918-1920*”, Tiranë, 1969; Cana, Zekeria: “*Shpallime historike*”, Prishtinë, 1982.

These aspirations will be expressed in a Committee program, demanding that in ethnic Albania the lands be included starting from the Sanjak of Yeni Pazar, Kosovo, Dukagjin, continuing with the Albanian lands in Macedonia from Kumanova, Shkup, Tetova, Gostivar, in the direction of the Greek border.¹⁶³⁰

When the Entente forces entered Albanian lands and by this the Axis powers were declared losers of the war, the Committee addressed the Great Powers with a request that the national program be realized.¹⁶³¹

Thus, in addition to these requests, the Committee also directed a protest against the Slavic atrocities in Kosovo and other Albanian provinces reconquered by them. Such is what the Committee addressed on December 4, 1918, to the Paris Peace Conference. Among other things, it stated:

“The Serbs, returning to their political borders in 1918 thanks to the armies of the Great Powers, the Entente, began to use the above-mentioned cruel methods again, bombed and razed to the ground seven villages in Pogur (Peja district), exiled many members of the Prishtina leadership, looted the Peja market and, after all this, forced a dozen of people from Peja and Gjakova to attend the Serbian-Montenegrin Nationalist Congress in Podgorica.”¹⁶³²

However, pursuant to changing circumstances, appearing already quite different from those of the London Conference of Ambassadors of 1912 when the Axis Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy) had the main say and defended the interests of Albania, even halved, when neighboring countries (Serbia and Greece) appeared on the side of the Entente Powers as their allies with open claims to destroy the London Albania, the “Committee” will try to adapt to these realities, seeing Italy as the only supporter. As Italy, though initially a member of the Axis Powers, had abstained from the war and later joined the Entente and even, based on some secret agreements with the British and French to include it on their side, was promised to having the main say in the Albanian issue, expectedly the “Committee” would seek support from Italy, as the main deterrent against the hegemonic claims of Belgrade and Greece to Albanian lands. The “Committee” even supported the incursion by the Italians to the north, especially to prevent Shkodra from falling into the hands of the Serbs, and issued a call in favor of Albanians opting for the Italians. Thus, in January 1919, given the role of Italy at the Peace Conference, the “Kosovo National Defense” Committee expressed its opinion on the views of the Italian and French governments, which among other things stated that the main purpose of the “Kosovo National Defense” Committee was to establish an independent Albania excluded from any form of protectorate, and rescue Kosovo together with the Albanian territories in Macedonia and unite them with Albania. The Committee rejected the conditions contrary to this high purpose.

On this occasion, the determination to pursue Italian policy was justified by the fact that the Italian government wanted to remove the emerging Yugoslav government from the northeast, and since this issue was in the interest of the Committee, the Committee, at this point, had confidence in Italy’s support.

Also, the Committee emphasized that Italy should not make any concessions about its territorial claims in Albania or to establish a protectorate over Albania. “This work must be done carefully because it was necessary to rescue Kosovo”.¹⁶³³

However, as will be seen at the Paris Peace Conference and beyond, the demands of the “*Kosovo National Defense*” Committee will not be heeded by the Great Powers, as the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom was already a new reality in the Balkans, as a very important factor which filled the gap created by the collapse of the two largest empires of the

¹⁶³⁰ See proclamation of Committee “*Mbrojtja Kombëtare e Kosovës*” (“*Kosova National Defense*”) by Bajrami, Hakif: “*Si e riokupoi Serbia Kosovën më 1918*”, Prishtinë 2012, pp. 201-203.

¹⁶³¹ Idem, p. 292.

¹⁶³² See: Bajrami, Hakif: “*Si e riokupoi Serbia Kosovën më 1918*”, pp. 292-296; Pushkolli, Fehmi: “*Mbrojtja Kombëtare shqiptare e Kosovës 1878-1990*”, Prishtinë, 1991, p. 80.

¹⁶³³ Idem, p. 81.

time, the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman. This not only removed from the game any concept of the factorization of Albanians on a regional scale, but also opened the issue of further defactorization of the Albanian state itself, to remove any possibility of turning into a supporter of the aspirations of Albanians uniting. Belgrade even tried to get the whole Albanian issue back to the Secret London Agreement of 1915 when it was expected to shrink to the size of a “Muslim Principality” (led by Esat Pasha Toptani), which could receive support, if it were not for the American intervention of President Wilson of February-March 1920, when he would be the first to reject the Anglo-Franco-Italian compromise of January 13-14, 1920, which provided for the exchange of Fiuma (Rijeka) with Shkodra demanding that the Albanian issue be separated from the “Adriatic issue”, i.e. that a split between Rome and Belgrade not be allowed.

From now on, Belgrade will make an effort, with a small correction, to support the concept of London Albania in order to prevent the Italians from influencing this part. As the rivalry between Belgrade and Rome for Albania and Albanians in general no longer appeared only as an issue within these two countries, but also of the rivalries between the Entente countries themselves (the French in favor of a Small Entente composed of states emerging from the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the British, who sought a Great Entente according to American interest, where Italy and Greece emerged as decisive factors). This helped Albania and Albanians in general to be in a better position than anticipated after the collapse of the Axis countries (Austria-Hungary and Germany) its main supporters.

In line with this development, Albania as a state had a good chance of survival and strengthening, provided that it was not suffocated from within, as happened on the eve of the First World War. While the issue of Kosovo and the remaining territories in general in the SKS Kingdom (Western Macedonia and Plava and Gucia) turned into minority issues, in accordance with international conventions and the package of cultural and religious rights that had entered into force based on the Convention of the League of Nations.

CHAPTER TWO

BELGRADE’S ANTI-ALBANIAN POLICY

THE BEGINNING OF COLONIZATION OF ALBANIAN LANDS

The colonization of Kosovo and Western Macedonia as well as other occupied Albanian territories during the Balkan Wars, which the London Conference in 1913 and the Paris Conference in 1919 recognized to Belgrade, was one of the main goals of the national program of Serb hegemony dealing with the return of ethnic balance in these parts from the Albanian one, as it was, to Serbian, as planned. This project, which began to be implemented from the day the Serbian and Montenegrin armies invaded Albanian territory, was closely linked to the displacement of Albanians from their ethnic lands, which in various forms continued after the First World War until World War Two, to continue further.

Colonization had three stages: the first from the invasions until the end of 1915; the second from 1921 to 1931, and the third from 1931 to 1941.

The first stage was based on the individual actions of the colonists (*naselenici*), who used the decrees to unite the “liberated” lands of the so-called Old Serbia, as Kosovo and Macedonia were then called by the Kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro. At this stage, before the “*Decree on the Population of the Southern Territories*” of 1920 was issued, the settlers received as much

land as they were able to work with their families. All those who showed willingness to go to Kosovo and Macedonia to live received land, regardless of whether or not they were farmers.¹⁶³⁴

The second stage includes colonization from 1921 to 1931, supervised by state bodies, relying on agrarian reform. In fact, in Kosovo and other Albanian areas, it intended to forcibly change the national structure to the detriment of the Albanians and for the benefit of the Serbians. At this stage, it was commonly manipulated that agrarian reform changed the old feudal property relations in favor of farmers, where the state was the bearer of property, while its users temporary owners by agreement in accordance with the laws set by the state. The settlers were given barren lands, forests, and state-expropriated lands. Here, too, settlers had the opportunity to choose the best lands, as “barren” lands included properties of Albanians forcibly expelled, those who had moved to Albania during the Balkan and World Wars, or those who had permanently moved to Turkey.¹⁶³⁵

In the third stage, from 1931 to 1941, the settlers were given arable land, which belonged to the Albanians.

At all stages the division of lands was done on the basis of the laws promulgated around the Agrarian Reform, which came into force on 27 August 1920.¹⁶³⁶

However, when it comes to the first stage, i.e. the Serb-Montenegrin invasions of the Albanian territories, it should be noted that there have been “different” reports, as Kosovo and other Albanian areas were divided into two parts. Dukagjin was occupied by Montenegro, while the rest of Kosovo, along with Macedonia, was occupied by Serbia. The border of these in Dukagjin followed Drin and Bistrica, while Gjakova was divided into two parts, where the eastern side of the river Krena belonged to Montenegro, and the western side to Serbia.

On the part of Serbia, from the occupation onwards, every Serb was free to take as much land as he thought he could afford toiling, without bothering if it was “state” land or belonging to Albanians. Since Albanians were not treated as citizens of “new Serbia”, but “violate”, from whom Serbs had to be protected by the police-military apparatus and other measures, and this also applied to their expropriated property, which was “legitimized” through “historical and spiritual title-deeds” against which they lose all rights.¹⁶³⁷

This situation continued until February 20, 1914, when Serbia issued the “*Order for the Colonization of the Liberated and Annexed Areas of the Kingdom of Serbia*” and the amendments to be made on May 5 of that year.¹⁶³⁸

Indeed, after the issuance of this decree, ostensibly to create the conditions for the start of the Agrarian Reform and to establish order on state property, Belgrade began to legitimize all usurpations and land acquisitions made by local Serbs, but also the “volunteer” settlers who

¹⁶³⁴ For more see: Obradović, Milovan: “*Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë 1981, pp. 21-25; Bajrami, Hakif: “*Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë 1981, pp. 41-43; Osmani, Jusuf: “*Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941*” I, II, III, Prishtinë, 2016, pp. 15-39, and 61-74.

¹⁶³⁵ Obradović, Idem, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁶³⁶ Obradović, Milovan: “*Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 134.

¹⁶³⁷ Idem.

¹⁶³⁸ For more see: Krsitić, Đorđe: “*Kolonizacija Južne Srbije*”, Sarajevo, 1928; Urošević, Atanasije: “*Agrarna reforma i naseljavanje*”, Skopje, 1937, pp. 826-833; Novaković, Kosta: “*Kolonizimi dhe serbizimi i Kosovës*”, Erić, Milivoje: “*Agrarna reforma u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*”, Sarajevo, 1958, p. 107; Hadri, Ali: “*Marrëdhëniet agrare dhe lufta e PKJ në Kosovë dhe Metohi kundër Reformës Agrare të padrejtë të Jugosllavisë borgjeze*”, “*Përparimi*”, 1964, no. 9, pp. 589-599; Obradović, Milovan: “*Agrarna Reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë, 1981; Osmani, Jusuf: “*Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941*”, I, II, III, Prishtinë, 2016.

appeared immediately after the Serbian army took control of the occupied territories. A special directorate, set up by the Ministry of Forestry and People's Economy, had overseen the process by distributing title-deeds to Serbs, while Albanians were conditioned by numerous almost unaffordable formalities.

World War I halted the organized state colonization of Kosovo and other Albanian territories occupied during the First Balkan War. When the war broke out, almost all the settlers had left Kosovo.¹⁶³⁹

In the part of Kosovo occupied by Montenegro (Dukagjin and part of Drenica), colonization began immediately after the establishment of the occupying power. Montenegro had formed an Agrarian Commission, which in December 1913 had begun work on registering properties, houses, and land belonging to the state and monasteries. The Agrarian Commission demanded proof of ownership from Albanians, title-deeds, which had to be older than 50 years. Since most Albanians could not get them, as the Ottoman government had taken all the cadastral records with them, while such title-deeds could only be obtained if they went to Turkey (which was impossible), then, the Montenegrin state declared as "state property" any land of which no ownership could be proven as defined by the Agrarian Commission.¹⁶⁴⁰

To give "legal backing" to the issue of "agrarian reform", which was nothing but forcible usurpation of Albanian land and granting it to settlers instead, as the Serbian Kingdom had done days before, Montenegro too, on February 27, 1914, had announced the law on the population of the liberated areas of Montenegro. By this law, the state declared as its property all the lands that could not be proved by means of title-deeds as private property. By this law, only in the district of Gjakova, the Agrarian Commission allocated 26 thousand *rala* of land (one *ral* was worth 40 *ars*), in which 500 families of settlers were to be settled.¹⁶⁴¹ ..

Thus, a simple family received five hectares of land free of charge, while for each other member it received 50 *ars* (half a hectare). Families also received free 50 *ars* of plot for homes and yards. The settlers were exempt from land and livestock taxes for three years as well as from all state taxes except those of churches and schooling.¹⁶⁴²

In the Montenegro areas, the entire work of the Agrarian Commission was overseen by General Vešović, who had the main say on all issues. General Vešović, known for his massacres of the population of Dukagjin, had engaged all the military potential so that in addition to the full protection given to the settlers and their actions land would be usurped at will, at the same time had intensified various measures of repression. Among them was the violent conversion of Albanians of Muslim and Catholic faiths to the Orthodox religion, to accelerate the displacement of Albanians to Turkey, but also to expel others to Albania. His efforts to achieve these goals were concentrated in Peja and on the border with Albania. The latter, for reasons of national security, and also for the protection of Orthodox monasteries (that of Deçan and Peja), were intended to turn into "pure Serbian areas".¹⁶⁴³

However, this process was interrupted by World War One. With the appearance of the Austro-Hungarian and German armies in the Dukagjin parts, the settlers had left with the

¹⁶³⁹ Rushiti, Limon: "Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928", Prishtinë 1981, p. 18; Bajrami, Hakif: "Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1841", Prishtinë, 1981.

¹⁶⁴⁰ For more see: Pejović, Đoko: "Agrarna politika crnogorske vlade u krajevima oslo-bođenim u balkanskom ratu 1912", Istorijasi zapisi, 1-2, 1955, p. 216.

¹⁶⁴¹ Idem, p. 217.

¹⁶⁴² Idem.

¹⁶⁴³ Idem.

invading Montenegrin army, which had withdrawn from Peja in the direction of Çakorr to Montenegro, while the Albanians had returned to their properties as well as national rights (Albanian language education, local autonomy, self-government, etc.) that they had not had before and they had rightly taken them as liberators.¹⁶⁴⁴

The end of the First World War will return the same occupiers to the Albanians occupied by Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, with the only difference that Serbia and Montenegro had already joined the Croats and Slovenes, who, after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, on December 1, 1918, had announced their unification into the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia, a new state, one of the most powerful in the region, to be recognized by the Paris Peace Conference.

The creation of this strong state created even more suitable circumstances for the great Serbian hegemonic bourgeoisie, to further its projects for the denationalization of Kosovo and other parts inhabited by Albanians (in Macedonia, Montenegro, and in Sanjak), in which case the agrarian reform of the common state became an important means of achieving this goal.

To this time belong the second stage of colonization (1921-1931) and the third stage of colonization (1931-1941).

The colonization of Kosovo and other Albanian territories remaining under the SCS Kingdom began immediately after the establishment of the common state, led by the great-Serbian bourgeoisie of Belgrade.

Through urgent measures and extraordinary decrees, the return of “expelled” families from Kosovo from 1915 onwards began, as the Austro-Hungarian and German armies appeared in these parts to end the Serbian and Montenegrin occupation. Their mass return began in January 1919, shortly after Regent Aleksandar Karadjordjević declared the monarchy of three peoples (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes) who were promised to become lords of their land.¹⁶⁴⁵

The manifesto proclaimed the cessation of feudal relations in favor of the new principle that the land belonged to the one who cultivates it. This meant that the current landowners were expropriated (with state compensation), while the landowners became landowners in accordance with the laws of the Agrarian Reform, which were specific to different parts, as social relations had not been the same in parts where the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had been with the Ottoman ones.

Although the elimination of feudalism and the return of land ownership rights to those who worked in accordance with the Agrarian Reform would have to present a positive turn for Albanians as well - as it also deprived them of the feudal system, beys, agalars, and other feudal structures - this did not happen. The new relations created a new owner - the state, while they were being expropriated not to be owned according to the reform and its rules that should apply to all equally, but to create a new layer of property, which appeared as occupier with the right of usurper based on the Law on the Unification of Liberated Lands from 1914 onwards, when each Serb and settler could appropriate and usurp land at will, without being concerned if he was taking land from the Albanians or from the barren properties, left without an owner through displacement of their real owners, and had been declared state property.

¹⁶⁴⁴ See: Abdyli, Tahir: “*Hasan Prishtina*”, Prishtinë, 2004, pp. 199-201.

¹⁶⁴⁵ See E. Šišić: “*Dokumenti o postanku Kraljevine SHS 1914-1919*”, Zagreb, 1920, p. 180.

Thus, in Kosovo from 1919 to 1921 colonization went through three different ways, but with the same goal of appropriating most of land. This development by the Belgrade government was called “populating” Kosovo.

The first way was called “internal colonization” and had to do with the mass descent of Serbs from the hilly-mountainous parts, such as those of Sharr towards the flow of Lepenc and Sitnica through the plateaus and fertile fields of Kosovo, those of Sredska towards Prizren, and the surrounding fields as well as those of Kollashin of Ibar in the direction of Drenica and Mitrovica.¹⁶⁴⁶

The second way was to colonize Kosovo with a Montenegrin column. They wanted to settle in Metohija, Peja, Drenica and some in Kosovo.¹⁶⁴⁷ The same source states that the Montenegrins usually volunteered in the part of Dukagjin and Drenica, which were previously selected. They put up signs and asked him to help them build houses. They also demanded that the army and police be on hand, even though they too were armed.¹⁶⁴⁸

The third mode of colonization was that of volunteer convoys from Herzegovina and Dalmatia. It is known that their demands were much greater than those of the Montenegrins. Because, in addition to arable land, which had water, they were also looking for new homes near roads with protected communications. They also demanded cattle and the presence of police and army everywhere.

However, despite the enormous opportunities to usurp fertile land and gaining the right to “state property”, during 1919 and 1920 no major colonization was observed. ..

According to official statistics, during 1919, a total of 33 families settled in Kosovo, 28 of them in the district of Nerodima. While in the next year this number increased tenfold. The largest number of settled families were in Peja (125), while 77 families were settled in Istog, Podujeva 28, and so on. 130 houses were built for the settlers.¹⁶⁴⁹

That the settlers in Kosovo took land at will, although the Agrarian Reform across the country provided a maximum of five hectares, is evidenced in some cases when the active army major, Medenica, took 18 hectares of land in Vitimirica, while teacher Klajić in Malisheva took 27 hectares of land.¹⁶⁵⁰ Among those who appeared to be large landowners in Kosovo was Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, who in Gazimestan, Kosovo, owned 300 hectares of land, which he had appropriated from the state fund on the grounds of a monument to the “heroes” of the Battle of Kosovo of 1389.¹⁶⁵¹

From 1920, when the Law on the Colonization of the Southern Territories was adopted, until 1931, when it was supplemented with some “instructions” of a formal and non-political nature, the discrimination of Albanians in the legal and administrative plain continued. This discrimination was open and always justified by “measures taken for the return of the Serb population in the old lands” in the circumstances of an “extraordinary situation” created by the “Kaçak terrorist movement”, and justified by the “national interest”. Translated into political language they were related to the great Serbian hegemonic projects for the denationalization of Kosovo and Macedonia by increasing the number of the Serb population by colonizing and

¹⁶⁴⁶ Report of the Chief Chargé d'Affaires of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform in Skopje, Sreten Vukosavljevic, no. 235, of 28. 08 .1919, from the Yugoslav Archives, Agrarian Reform Fund 1918-1941.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Idem.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Idem.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Obradović, Milovan: “*Agrarna reforma na Kosovu 1918-1941*”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 136.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Idem, p. 137.

¹⁶⁵¹ Krstić, Đorđe: “*Kolonizacija Južne Srbije*”, Skopje, 1928, p. 5.

relocating Albanians to Turkey and elsewhere. Thus, the first discrimination will be the one related to property rights, where Serbs and Montenegrins received five hectares of land per family, including half a hectare for each child and half a hectare for home and half a hectare for yard, without excluding the loans they received from the state, while Albanians could get a maximum of two hectares per family without the right to child and other family members allowances. Knowing that Albanian families were large, the narrowing to only two hectares turned them into poor people. But even to secure two hectares, many administrative and judicial barriers had to be overcome, from declaring loyalty to the Yugoslav state (meaning citizenship) to other official formalities that could only be overcome through corruption which often meant losing half of the property. Unable to cope with all these difficulties, many Albanians were determined to move to Turkey to escape state persecution, humiliation, and terror.

Another discriminating measure against Albanians used to pressure them to move to Turkey was the one dealing with the “property of Kaçaks”, which turned to state property and then granted to the settlers.

According to a 1926 issued order, based on a decree from 1922, the state had the right to confiscate the land and all the property belonging to Kaçaks (outlaws), but also of their supporters, as it had the right to treat similarly the families of the internees and others declared “hostile”.¹⁶⁵²

By this order, Belgrade not only punished the militants of the Albanian national resistance, who continued to operate in certain parts, confiscating their property, but also punished their extended relatives, declaring them criminals. The punitive measures were sometimes taken against relatives and the villagers, even if a gendarme was killed or a police station or army was attacked at the same place.

One of the most severe punitive measures, however, remained the deportation of Kaçak families outside Kosovo, mainly to Serbia. Thus, after the promulgation of the amnesty law of 1921, to which a small number of Kaçaks responded, Belgrade will begin to apply this measure to the "disobedient" who were outlawed after the deadline. From the District of Prishtina, in March 1921, Ibush's mother and brothers Esat Vuçiternalia were interned in Nis, Bajram Tërnavë was deported 5 family members, Latif Bajrami's wife, son and brother were deported.¹⁶⁵³

In 1921, the following families were interned in the Nis camp:

1. From the Metohija County, 21 families with 74 members;
2. From the Zvečan County, 22 families with 60 members;
3. From the Kosovo County, 16 families with 81 members;
4. From the Prizren County, 11 families with 44 members;
5. From the Kumanova County, 3 families with 14 members;
6. From the Tetova County, 12 families with 58 members;
7. From the Rascia County, (Tutin, Yeni Pazar), 13 families with 69 members;
8. From the Manastir County, 6 families with 20 members;
9. From the Ohri County, 1 family with 5 members.¹⁶⁵⁴

¹⁶⁵² Rushiti, Limon: “*Lëvizja Kaçake në Kosovë 1918-1928*”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 158.

¹⁶⁵³ Idem.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Idem, p. 158.

Police and military authorities, as well as their services in Shkup (Skopje) decided who should be included in the “short” or “large” lists of Kaçaks. Thus, according to Item 27 of the Decree on the Colonization of the Southern Areas, the police and army were the ones who decided on all issues related to ownership in the border area, but also in parts that were identified by the police and the army “as Kaçak centers”, which were intended for colonization, but which could thus be cleansed of Albanians. Many cases are known when, in order to create favorable circumstances for colonization in certain parts, the Kaçak actions were staged in advance by the agents of the Serbian police and army, who appeared in Albanian clothes.

Police and the army staged “pursuits” of masked “Kaçaks” who usually fled, while the police, announcing fake news for the press, allegedly about killings of police officers or soldiers, undertook extensive cleansing campaigns, in which entire villages suffered. Once raised to the ground, the population had no choice but to sell their property for a small amount of money and take the road to Turkey, or move to other places.¹⁶⁵⁵

One of such horrific staging is that of the village of Prapashtica, when after the army destroyed the villages by heavy guns in search of “Kaçaks”, as a “punishment” 22 families of settlers from Serbia were brought in, settling in properties owned by Albanians who had been declared as “enemies”. After ten years, a court declare the collective expulsion of Albanians from this part “unfair”, though this was too late, as most of them had moved out to Turkey.¹⁶⁵⁶

Other villages in Kosovo (Arilaça, Kabash, Jabllanica) were similarly colonized, filling them with settlers from Krajina, Montenegro, and Dalmatia.

According to an incomplete statistic (as the data on the lands of the Kaçaks and their supporters (jataks) were kept by the Ministry of Interior and the 3rd Military Command Zone in Shkup), it turns out that the agrarian sector in Prizren was granted 295.5 hectares of land confiscated from Kaçaks. In Peja and the surrounding area (including Gjakova) the agrarian fund was given 2,761.3 hectares of land belonging to Kaçaks to be distributed to settlers from Montenegro. In the part of Llap and Drenica there were about 500 hectares of land belonging to Kaçaks, which had been granted to the Serbian and Dalmatian settlers. So, this was about 4,000 hectares of land previously owned by the Kaçaks.¹⁶⁵⁷

Similarly, land seized by the state “from foreign nationals”, fleeing “enemies”, and those who moved to Turkey during the Balkan Wars was distributed to settlers without any legal procedure.

In addition to taking Albanian lands illegally and through usurpation, given to the settlers instead, in order to increase the number of Serbs in Kosovo, in accordance with the well-known hegemonic attitudes of the great-Serbs, as declared since “Načertanije” hereafter and proclaimed on the occasion of the establishment of the SCS Kingdom, Belgrade also took care of turning Kosovo into a major ecclesiastical feud, where Orthodox monasteries would become the main owners of land. From 1922 the medieval Orthodox churches, although common property of the Christians, where the Albanians from the 4th century onwards, after being among the first to accept Christianity, had invested in them, were proclaimed as Serbian

¹⁶⁵⁵ For more see: Krstić, Đorđe: “Kolonizacija u Južnoj Srbiji“, Sarajevo, 1928; Lazarević, Tihomir: “Naš kolonizacioni problem“, Srpsko Kosovo, no. 7, Kosovska Mitrovica, 1921; Novaković, Kosta: “Kolonizacija i srbizacija“, Balkanska federacija, Vjena, 1931; Albin, Prepeluh: “Agrarna reforma naš veliki problem“, Ljubljana, 1933; Davidović, Jaša: “Agrarni problem“, Beograd, 1928.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Krstić, Đorđe: “Kolonizacija u Južnoj Srbiji“, Sarajevo, 1928, p. 61.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Obradović, Milovan: “Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija na Kosovu 1918-1941“, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 146.

Orthodox churches and Serbian spiritual wealth respectively. They treatment as “national wealth” was accepted, so the properties of the Monastery of Gračanica, Peja, Deçan, Levishka, and St. Archangel in Prizren and the Monastery of Deviq in Drenica increased by tenfold. On this occasion, the Albanians were deprived of over a thousand hectares of land around these churches.¹⁶⁵⁸

In this way, the Gračanica and Deçan monasteries received the most land, which had to be turned into large centers for Serbian and Montenegrin settlers. In the part of Gračanica and Deçan, the expulsion of Albanians from their lands was done through police and military intervention after their owners were previously asked for title-deeds, which had to be provided within 48 hours or leave by force. As not many of them possessed title-deeds, and many were unable to get them as the matter was connected to the Ottoman administration, while the cadastral and other records from the Ottoman time the SCS Kingdom was not even interested in having, the Albanians had no other way but leave, or take refuge in various hilly-mountainous parts, where the government leased land but under very difficult conditions. Thus, to strengthen the Serb element in the district of Gračanica by December 1932, out of 11,391.41 hectares of arable land more than half (7,625 hectares) were given to 907 colonial families. 14 Chetnik families were given 64.5 hectares of land. In the same district, 15 volunteer settlers families were settled, to which 69 hectares of land were given.¹⁶⁵⁹

With the Agrarian Reform, great efforts were made to increase the number of settlers in some parts inhabited mainly by Albanians, such as Gjakova and the surrounding area and the part of Podrimja, with other stimulus measures, including loans, construction of houses, security of livestock fund and the creation of road infrastructure. Until 1932 in this municipality 53 thousand hectares of arable land was dedicated for the settlers out of 77 thousand that the municipality had which numbered 43 thousand Albanian inhabitants. 17,000 hectares of arable land for settlers were also distributed in Podrimja. By 1932, 2,153 colonial families had settled in the municipality of Gjakova, mostly Montenegrins, who were given 15,613 hectares of land. In the district of Podrima, 24 families with 235 hectares of land were settled. In the vicinity of Gjakova, 23 colonist families, who received 198 hectares of land, were settled through the intervention of the agrarian leaders. Until 1932, 1955 colonial houses were built in the district of Gjakova, of which 560 were built by the state, and the others were built by the colonists themselves with the help of loans and much other aid they received from the state.¹⁶⁶⁰

Only in the district of Drenica, where the center of the Kaçak movement was located, services were provided for the eviction of Albanians and for bringing in settlers. Belgrade exploited the tense situation created by the Kaçak movement in these areas to ruing the living base of Albanian families, persecuting them in various ways and banishing by law some of them, either for being part of the Kaçak movement or after being declared as *jataks* (hosts) for the Kaçaks, or because many of them had lost property rights based on these accusations. In Drenica, the center of which was already called Serbica, 406 families of settlers were settled, to whom over three thousand hectares of the best type of land were given. 44 families of settlers were given 330 hectares of land. In this part, the state built 414 houses for settlers, which were also equipped with other ancillary facilities: schools, ambulances, and police stations.

¹⁶⁵⁸ See: Osmani, Jusuf: “Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941”, Prishtinë, 2016, pp. 65-68.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Idem.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Archive of Yugoslavia, S, 96, Box. 12/48

According to official statistics, until 1939, the condition of building the houses for the colonists, which exceeded 12,000, was provided as follows: Istog with 1,027 houses, Peja with 1,229 houses, Gjakova with 1,955 houses, Podrimja with 596 houses, Mitrovica District with 85 houses, Deçan with 497 houses, Llap with 1,307 houses, Sharr District with 808 houses, Podgur with 73, Graçanica with 1,010 houses, Gjilan with 688 houses, Nerodimja with 281 houses, Kaçanik with 64 houses and Ferizaj District together with the part of Nerodima with 3,621 houses.¹⁶⁶¹

Official Yugoslav data show that from 1920 to 1940 in Kosovo the land was allocated to 11,714 colonial families, 248 volunteer families, 80 Chetnik families, and 508 colonial families. The data show that in Mitrovica district the settlers received 4.98 hectares per family, in Vuçitrina 7, 29 hectares per family, in Deçan 9-10 hectares, in Istog 8.9 hectares, in Peja 8.1 hectares, in Gjakova 8.1 hectares, in Podrimje 12.3 hectares, in Prizren 9.1 hectares, in Llap 8.5 hectares, in Graçanica 7.9 hectares, in Kaçanik 8.1 hectares, and in Podgor 5.08 hectares. In Kosovo, so a family of settlers received 8.5 hectares of land.¹⁶⁶²

Thus, 11,383 families of settlers with 53,884 members settled in Kosovo. Of these, 49,244 Serbs, 5,148 Croats, and 126 Slovenes. These data are incomplete, as the military, police and senior administrators were entitled to bring in settlers out of official statistics. So it is estimated that this number should be even by 20% higher.

Taken as a whole, agrarian reform as a means of colonizing Kosovo with Serbs, Montenegrins, and others, failed to meet the predictions of its planners, who had predicted that within twenty years the population structure in Kosovo would change to the detriment of the Albanians, which, from 86% during the Balkan Wars, had to be reduced to about 30%, while the Slavic population (Serbs and Montenegrins) would have to increase from 8% in 1912 to 60%. So, mathematically, in order to achieve this, about 400 thousand Albanians would have to be displaced from Kosovo by force or other methods, while about 300 thousand settlers would have to come in. But if Belgrade, in spite of all the favorable conditions it had offered to the Serbs to colonize Kosovo, had failed to bring in more than 60,000 of them, then it had met only one-fifth of what had been anticipated, yet it had succeeded, in various forms, to permanently expel over 200,000 Albanians, or one third of them.¹⁶⁶³

This, however, was a great success for Belgrade, which was achieved primarily through military-police means against the Albanian population, but also by other means, such as discrimination in the case of agrarian reform, confiscating property and depriving Albanians of all opportunities to defend ownership rights, which they had during the Ottoman Empire, or

¹⁶⁶¹ Archive of Yugoslavia, 671-28-263, Report of Central Agrarian Directorate, no. 344 , 12 December 1940.

¹⁶⁶² Idem.

¹⁶⁶³ On the exact number of Albanians displaced from 1913 to 1941 in Turkey, Albania or other countries no accurate data exist in the Yugoslav, Albanian or Turkish archives. Various sources speculate with the number from 200 thousand to 400 thousand. Albania does not even possess data on the temporary or permanent housing of Albanians who found shelter there during the Balkan wars and later, for the simple fact that the Albanian state began creating its state archive from the second half of the twenties, though without including data that would somehow address this issue. The Yugoslav Kingdom has argued that despite the 1938 convention with Turkey, which has not been ratified and as such had not entered into force, there has been no official relocation to Turkey, but acknowledges that this has taken place through illegal channels, which was made possible through the temporary visa system distributed by the Turkish consulate in Skopje. On this occasion it was said that it was about a Muslim population that felt Turkish. Tito's Yugoslavia admits that between the 1950s and 1960s, in accordance with the agreement with Turkey, there was a displacement of the Turkish population to Turkey, mostly from Macedonia, Kosovo, Sandzak, but also Bosnia, without ever being granted the exact number of displaced. The only meritorious source that could shed light on this issue are the archives of Turkey, but even they speak only of "repatriation" of the Turkish and Muslim population without giving notes on the national affiliation of the displaced. It is unofficially accepted in Turkey that from the Berlin Congress until the 1950s, about two million Turks were "repatriated" from the Balkans.

which they were to gain by the overthrow of the feudal order, when the peasants acquired ownership rights over the land they had been using. Thus, prosecuted and discriminated against, deprived of the right to property, and for more expelled from it because of resisting state terror (as was the case with the Kaçak movement, which had great merit for curbing the process of colonization of Kosovo in line with Belgrade's goals), a good part of the Albanian population will seek to leave Kosovo for Turkey, in order to find salvation there, and also perspective.

The displacement of Albanians from their ethnic lands, as well as its colonization with Serbs and Montenegrins, was part of the Serbian national program. The implementation of this project had to start with the Balkan Wars, when for Belgrade the fight against the last remnants of the Ottoman Empire in Albanian lands had to turn into a "liberation" war for the "return of old Serbia". It had to be directed against the Albanian population and its existential being. As will be seen, during the First Balkan War, the designers and implementers of this scenario will move into action. They were soldiers of the Serbian and Montenegrin armies, as well as the accompanying services, which turned the fight for the pursuit of the Ottoman forces into a war against the Albanian people, as was done in the war of 1877/78 on the occasion of the penetration of the Serbian army in the province of Toplica when during the military operation of that winter over 400 villages and settlements of Albanians in these parts were razed to the ground, whereas this population was completely expelled from the area.¹⁶⁶⁴

Both the incursion and occupation of Albanian territories during the First Balkan War in the autumn and winter of 1912/13 was done with almost the same scenario. Serbian and Montenegrin armies, one from the north and the other in three directions (from the Iber valley, Nish, and the Vardar valley) had targeted the vulnerable Albanian population, which during the penetration of these armies, to escape the terrible massacre, had fled in two directions: towards Albania and towards Turkey. Both directions were led by the military and the strategy set beforehand for the occupation to be followed by the mass expulsion of the Albanian population in these directions.¹⁶⁶⁵

Thus, according to the data collected, in addition to the mass killings and shootings by the Serbian and Montenegrin armies during the military operations, where over 30 thousand people had died, about one hundred thousand Albanians had crossed into Albania as refugees, while over fifty thousand had succeeded to follow the withdrawal of the Ottoman army in the direction of Turkey. Most of them had gone through Macedonia to Thessaloniki and from there to Turkey. Most of those who had tried to cross from Bulgaria to Turkey via Sofia (estimated at over 20,000) had failed to do so. Many of them had died on the streets, while a small part had been taken under protection by the Albanian Colony in Sofia, and from then on, some of them had somehow survived, through humanitarian and religious associations, and had been sent through to Turkey.

This ordeal, which had not gone unnoticed by the European public, but also by the Serbian Social Democrats themselves, continued even after the Conference of Ambassadors in London decided that the territories occupied by the Serbian and Montenegrin armies be

¹⁶⁶⁴ More about the military operations against the Albanian population during the Serb-Turkish war of 1877/78 and the Russian-Turkish war of 1878 see Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Kongresi i Berlinit dhe Lidhja shqiptare 1878*", Prishtinë, 2012; "*Nga Shqipëria Osmane te Shqipëria Europiane*", Prishtinë, 2010; "*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*", II, Tiranë, 2002; Frashëri, Kristo: "*Lidhja shqiptare e Prizrenit 1878-1881*", Tiranë, 2012.

¹⁶⁶⁵ On the genocide against Albanians see: "A Trail of Blood", "New York Times", 31 December 1912; Freundlich, L: "*Golgota e Ballkanit*"; Tucović, D.: "*Srbija i Arbanija*", Beograd, 1914.

accepted to these states.¹⁶⁶⁶ In fact, from the end of 1913 until August 1914, when World War I broke out, the two countries systematically used state terror tools, primarily military and police ones, to perpetuate the genocide against Albanians. The actions by Belgrade and Cetina are well known, to provoke the Albanian population in the most unprecedented ways, so that it responds and opposes. This is how the population of Dibra and Dukagjin reacted during the autumn and winter of 1913, getting involved into a large-scale uprising, which will end in tragic consequences. The Serbian army declared this a “separatist movement”, against which, in order to extinguish it, it took extremely harsh measures. The same was done in other parts of Kosovo, when even the slightest resistance by Albanians against the occupying power was followed by a military response, which was directed against the defenseless population and their villages, which were being destroyed.

Among these serious provocations, however, were the campaigns on disarmament, mobilization, and particularly, mortification of religious buildings, being either demolished, or turning into warehouses, horse stables for the army soldiers and gendarmerie. In fact, according to a note, the Third Army Command had proclaimed that it would continue to hold all mosques and *mekteps* for war purposes.¹⁶⁶⁷

Knowing the social circumstances and traditions of the Albanians, the Serbian and Montenegrin armies were stationed in the villages, forcibly setting up headquarters in certain tower-houses of the Albanians on selective basis after evicting their owners. In addition to these highly arbitrary actions, resulting in permanent displacement of owners from them, or their opposition (which was clearly known how it ended), the Serbian military authorities, according to the instructions received to humiliate and insult the vulnerable Albanian population, many of them made to serve the army, while continuing to raid large families, not hesitating to humiliate young in front of women and children in addition to imprisonment.

EXPULSION OF ALBANIANS TO TURKEY

Following World War One, with the formation of the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom, with the proclamation of agrarian reform in August 1920, the process of colonization of Kosovo and other Albanian territories remaining within the borders of the Yugoslav Kingdom resumed. In the years 1919-1941, the great Serbian bourgeoisie used the Yugoslav state and all its great potential to achieve the anti-Albanian goal. Agrarian reform as a means of colonization was followed by many other forms of open national discrimination which meant at breaking and for more dividing the Albanian ethnicity to the extent of setting a new relationship to the benefit of the Slavic population.

This issue was well studied and its main focus was on the forced displacement of Albanians to Turkey and elsewhere, where on the one hand the armed resistance of Albanians in their effort to protect their lands would be used as a natural response to the state of occupation, and on the other hand were the measures of open economic, national and political discrimination of Albanians in all areas of life, in order to give them the impression that they

¹⁶⁶⁶ At more length: Kosta Novakovic: “*Nacionalizacija i srbizacija Kosova*”, “La federalitione balcanique”, Vienna, 1931, newspaper reports of “*Proleter*”, “*Rad*”, “*Socialistička zora*”, “*Pravda*”, “*Hak*”, and others during November-December 1912, and January-June 1913.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Arhiv Jugoslavije (Archive of Yugoslavia), Note 63, Box 135, documents: 471, 148, 27, and 28.

were foreigners and enemies of the Slavic state, while they should look elsewhere for their future: Albania or Turkey.

Pursuant to this military-police measures as well as those of economic and political nature were undertaken. These had to produce discontent, despair, and submission of the Albanians. Whereas the revolt and resistance to the armed one appeared, as was the case with the Kaçak movement, then state violence had to be used to destroy the subsistence of Albanians, which was to achieve two goals: that of their forced displacement and moving out of their lands and at the same time the creation of a suitable space for the placement of settlers in the properties and houses of the rebellious Albanians and those who were declared enemies of the state because resisting state terror.

Of course, this behavior created real circumstances for a greater displacement of Albanians to Turkey, or their fleeing to Albania.

After the First World War, due to the inability of war and its means to be used for mass displacement of the population, as was done during the First Balkan War and the operations that had continued for another year, the process of displacement to Turkey would mostly turn into a clandestine action. Various factors will be involved, from Yugoslav police-military services, speculators, criminals and various beneficiaries, in the form of a whole network. Although it can be said that from 1924, after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, headed by Kemal Atatürk (Mustafa Kemal, of Albanian descent), this process slowed down, it continued to grow attaining ever larger proportions. The Turkish state itself contributed to this, concluding a state agreement with Belgrade for the relocation of the “Turkish” population to Turkey.

The extent of the manipulations with the refugees and their sending to Turkey through clandestine channels is best described by the newspaper “*Hak*”, which informs about the connections of the Yugoslav police services with the Turkish Consulate in Skopje and the captain of the “*Turan*” ship in Thessaloniki, permeating Albanian immigrants among Greek immigrants sent to Turkey due to a Turkish-Greek state agreement on population exchange. The paper reported that the deserted refugees had to pay additional taxes to board the ship, from where they were then thrown into a Turkish port without papers.¹⁶⁶⁸

In addition, the Yugoslav government had managed to include a good number of Albanian displaced persons in the lists of Bulgarian *Muhajirs*, from where then they moved to Turkey. In such a contingent, 240 Albanian families were sent from Prizren, Gjakova and Peja, which, without papers, had remained on the streets of Istanbul.¹⁶⁶⁹

In order for the relocation to include the “Turkish population who had the right to return to their home country”, the Belgrade and Turkish governments, in 1926, were able to draft an agreement for the relocation of 300-400 thousand people, mostly Albanians, whom the two countries considered “Turks”. This project, for at least not to receive official support, which it did a little later, was halted shortly after the publication by the newspaper “*Hakimiyet-i Milliye*” and “*Milliyet*” in April 1927, though this did not stop the clandestine channels to continue the deportation of Albanians to Turkey. About this, the Prefect of Zveçan County wrote to the King with pride that “while I served as Prefect from my region from 1924 to 1927, 32 thousand

¹⁶⁶⁸ Newspaper “*Hak*”, 30 January 1924, and 13 February 1924.

¹⁶⁶⁹ See DASIP: Document of State Archive of Foreign Affairs Secretary of SCS Kingdom, 831, p. 7.

Albanians moved to Asia, Albanians dangerous for our country, while their properties were taken by the Montenegrins”.¹⁶⁷⁰

The same report also discusses the relocation of 6,000 other Albanians who moved to Albania. It is unofficially stated that from 1918 to 1929, in various forms, about 130,000 Albanians were displaced to Turkey. Although this figure cannot be confirmed by deserving sources, as many of those who had gone to Turkey had passed through clandestine channels, while in the absence of personal documents, the official Turkish authorities had listed them as war refugees, yet the number of displaced from Kosovo and other areas exceeded one hundred thousand. In the meantime, the relocation of 3,126 Albanian families to Albania occurred, most of whom crossed the border into the north. In fact, this border crossing never stopped, because the SKS Kingdom had established permanent channels for the expulsion of Albanians from parts of Dukagjin to Albania. The methods were quite “simple”: following an action by Kaçaks, when a Serbian gendarme or official was killed, then began the raids, imprisonments and persecution of the population, which fled on the way to Albania. Near the border, the army and other people helped them cross the border. For anything else, Belgrade minded less.¹⁶⁷¹

As the Turkish state had reached an agreement with Romania and Bulgaria on the relocation of the Turks to Turkey, and the same had been achieved with Greece, Yugoslavia opened the issue of the relocation of the “Turkish population” to Turkey. For this purpose, the meeting of the Balkan Council was used in Ankara on February 25-27, 1938. On this occasion, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Rusdi Aras, raised the issue of the displacement of “Turks” from the Balkans proposing that a commission be established composed of two Romanians, two Yugoslavs, and two Turks to convene the Commission in April 1938 and begin work exclusively on the displacement of Albanians from Kosovo.¹⁶⁷²

Notably, those four inter-ministerial conferences were held in Belgrade, from the beginning of March to mid-June of that year. The Yugoslav government insisted that the population of Kosovo’s villages should have priority, so that the space for colonization could be vacated.¹⁶⁷³

Following much discussion about the number of displaced people and the dynamics of its implementation, a decision was passed on the compensation that Turkey should receive from Yugoslavia. Under the agreement, Yugoslavia would pay Turkey a maximum compensation of 15,000 dinars per family, or 2-5,000 dinars per member, and 20% of that compensation would have to be paid to Turkey in free currency, while 80% would be deposited into the account of the People’s Bank of the Turkish Government for ensuring merchandise in Yugoslavia.¹⁶⁷⁴

The agreement between the Government of Turkey and the Government of Yugoslavia was signed on July 11, 1938. This highly secret document provides data on the purpose of the Convention. It states that 40,000 Muslim families will be relocated to Turkey from Yugoslavia, from territories annexed by Serbia and Montenegro in 1912 and 1913. The relocation, the Convention says, will take six years, provided it can be extended for another year. Yugoslavia will pay Turkey for each family displaced 500 Turkish lira, of which 30% in foreign currency,

¹⁶⁷⁰ Idem, Doc. 15.

¹⁶⁷¹ Idem.

¹⁶⁷² See: Documents of State Archive of Yugoslavia DASIP, DNŽ, p. 15, doc.1, and p. 9, doc. 4.

¹⁶⁷³ Bajrami, Hakif: “Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1941”, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 159, and Osmani, Jusuf: “Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941”, I, II, III, Prishtinë, 2016.

¹⁶⁷⁴ See: Documents of State Archive of Yugoslavia DASIP, DNŽ, p. 15, doc.1; AVII. P. Box 95 a, p. 2, doc.1.

while the remaining 70% will be deposited in the People's Bank, in a Turkish Government account. With the deposited money, the Turkish government would purchase goods in the Yugoslav market.¹⁶⁷⁵

According to Article 12 of the Convention, persons who will be evacuated during the period of displacement, who will be displaced according to the annual list, must submit (present) a written statement to the Yugoslav authorities under Article 53 of the Law on Yugoslav Citizens testifying they are willingly renouncing Yugoslav citizenship. These people will be qualified and enjoy the rights of the displaced under Turkish law, from the moment when the representatives of Turkey, who will be appointed on the issue, will sign the annual immigration lists in Turkey.

Under the Convention, forcibly displaced *Muhajirs* had the right to take a head of livestock and use the railway to Thessaloniki, from where other costs were borne by the Turkish government.

The removal was to take place on the following dynamic: on July 1, 1939, 4,000 families would be displaced; in 1940 6,000 families would be displaced; in 1941 7,000 families would be displaced; in 1942 7,000 families would be displaced; in 1943 8,000 families would be displaced; and in 1944, 8,000 families would be displaced.

The regions subject to emigration under this Convention were:

1. Region of Vardar Banovina:

Region of Sharr Mountain (Prizren); Gora (Dragash); Podgora (Suhareka); Nerodimja (Ferizaj); Donji Pollog-Lower Pollog (Tetova); Gornji Pollog-Upper Pollog (Gostivar); Galica (Rostusha); Dibra (Dibër); Struga (Strugë); Gračanica (Prishtina); Kaçanik (Kaçanik); Gjilan (Gjilan); Presheva (Presheva); Prespa (Resnja); Poreç (Juzhni Brod-Makedonski Brod); Prilep (Prilep); Bitol (Manastir); Kavadarci (Kavadari); Marihovo (Manastir-Marihovë); Negotin Na Vardaru (Negotin of Vardar); Skopje (Shkup), Kumanova (Kumanovë); Veles (Veles); Ovçe Pole (Ovçe Pole); Radovishte (Radovishtë); Strumica (Strumicë); Dojrani (Valandova); Gevgelija (Gjevgjelija); Kriva Palanka (Kriva Pallanka); Kratovo (Kratova); Carevo Sello (Carevo Sello); Malesi (Berovo).

2. Region of Zeta Banovina, including:

Peja (Peja); Istok (Istog); Mitrovica (Mitrovica of Kosovo); Gjakova (Gjakova); Podrimje (Rahovec).

3. Region of Morava Banovina, including:

Llap (Podujeva); Vuçitërnë; Drenica (Serbica).

The Yugoslav government would determine from which region emigration (displacement) would begin.

The Turkish government had demanded an immediate signing of the Convention in Belgrade or Ankara. It was preferred that it not be published due to external and internal political circumstances. It was preferred to be implemented as a government order and to be justified by the subsequent Financial Law of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.¹⁶⁷⁶

¹⁶⁷⁵ Bajrami, Hakif: "Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1941", Prishtinë, 1981, p. 160.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Idem, p. 160.

ANTI-ALBANIAN PROGRAMS OF SERBIAN ACADEMICS AND THE 1937 ČUBRILOVIĆ MEMORANDUM

In contrast to nineteenth-century nationalist policies, which, among the Slavo-Orthodox peoples of the Balkans, rely on expansionist ideology, Serbian nationalism projected “Greater Serbia” on a platform of extreme hegemony, which to achieve its occupying goals envisaged ethnic cleansing programs. They had to be carried out in various ways, from those of exploiting “liberation” wars with the Ottoman Empire to the use of state violence in the name of “law and order”. Even before becoming a state, under the circumstances of an autonomous Pashalik, such as that of Belgrade in the 1840s, Serbian politician and diplomat Ilija Garašanin came up with “*Načertanije*” in 1844, in which the future Serbian state was projected in a space two to three times larger than the actual size of the ethnic Serb dispersion.¹⁶⁷⁷

In addition to the extension to the western parts (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Dalmatia), where the Slavs had created the “nucleus” from their invasion of Illyricum onwards, the rest had to do with the ethnic Albanian space (Vilayet of Kosovo, Shkodra and Bitola), including that of Thessaloniki, where Slavo-Macedonians were in the majority. Thus, through the Albanian space, Serbia planned to have outlets to two seas: the Adriatic and the Aegean. For the ideologue of great Serbian nationalism and hegemony, “natural” Serbia was justified by the “medieval historical right” of the Serbs, although this “right”, beyond any reality, was only a construct built on the myth of Kosovo, which had to be built by all means, without excluding war, to which Serbia adhered up to our time.

Thus, during the Serb-Ottoman War of 1876/7, Serbia made its first invasions, expanding in the direction from Nis to Kursumlija through invasions mostly at the expense of the Albanian ethnicity. Although it lost this war to Turkey, the Serbian army sophisticatedly attacked the Albanian settlements, which it destroyed, forcing a large part of the population to flee. It was this warning of a morbid behavior, which Serbia will put into action a year later when it exploited the Russian-Ottoman war and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire for the same purposes, but this time with fatal consequences for Albanians, since during this new invasion, the Serbian army cleared Toplica of the total non-Serb population of this part. On this occasion, in addition to the unprecedented terror exercised against the defenseless population (it is estimated that there were over ten thousand Albanians killed and over fifty thousand others displaced to Kosovo and Turkey), over 400 Albanian settlements were destroyed. These territories, along with several others, were granted to Serbia by the Peace of St. Stefano in March 1878, while many of them were recognized by the Berlin Congress of June of that year, whereupon Serbia emerged as an independent state in a space 60% larger than what it had as an autonomous Pashalik (of Belgrade), a space that until then was mostly inhabited by Albanians, as Serbian sources also admit. According to these sources, the Serbian principalities (Pashalik of Belgrade) in 1875, with 37 thousand square kilometers of space, had 1.3 million inhabitants, of which 59% Serbs, about 20% Vlachs, and about 30% Muslim population, most of them Albanian. The whole province of Toplica (from Prokuplje and Kurshumlija, with an area of about 8 thousand square kilometers), which a year later, during the Serb-Russian War was occupied by the Serbian army, was mostly inhabited by Albanians.¹⁶⁷⁸

¹⁶⁷⁷ See full text (document) of “*Načertanija*” of Garašanin at Verli, Marengelen: “*Kosova sfida shqiptare në historinë e një shekulli*”, Tiranë, 2007, pp. 29-43.

¹⁶⁷⁸ More about the ethnic distribution of Albanians in the province of Toplica as well as the ethnic picture in the Pashalik of Belgrade and other parts of Serbia on the eve of the Berlin Congress see the following Serbian sources: Jagodić, Miloš: “*Naselevanje kneževine Srbije 1861-1880*”, Beograd, 2004; Protić, Stojan (Balkanicus): “*Albanski problem i Srbija i Austro-Ugarska*”, Beograd, 1913.

During that war and after the return of the Serbian army in the winter of 1878 to those areas, it will be cleared of the Albanian element, while in addition to the eleven thousand killed and missing, more than one hundred thousand people move out to Kosovo and Turkey.¹⁶⁷⁹

Encouraged by the gifts brought to her by the Berlin Congress, Serbia planned the next step to occupy most of the Albanian territory, so that in cooperation with its allies (Greece, Montenegro, and Bulgaria) it would once and for all put an end to the Albanian issue by dividing their ethnicity into four parts, which had to be followed by ethnic cleansing of the Albanians.

This step too had to be taken through war, but this time by the “liberation” against the Ottoman Empire, which eventually had to leave European space. Seeing that Albanians from the Albanian League of Prizren and especially from the Young Turk Revolution, thanks to national programs that predicted an autonomous Albanian state within the Ottoman Empire were being factorized, Hasan Prishtina’s agreement with Ibrahim Pasha would be used to set the conditions for the so-called Ottoman Albania to be at war with the Ottoman Empire.

So, the First Balkan War of autumn 1912 was not about being “liberated” from the Ottoman Empire, but rather to prevent the project of creating an Ottoman Albania, which would one day turn into a European Albania.

In fact, this war was hegemonic on the one hand and invading on the other: hegemonic because it had nothing to do with “national liberation” - since all four states had long since reached and exceeded the size of their ethnic spaces largely to the detriment of Albanians and their ethnicity - and occupying because after the departure of the Ottomans the Albanians were placed under another occupying yoke which threatened them with physical extinction.

That this scenario would be followed was already becoming obvious by both “secret” and open treaties that the Balkan states (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) had concluded in early 1912 and by June of that year with each other or together to divide the Albanian space. However, that they would be acting together in that spirit, it would be seen become clear as their war against the Ottoman Empire began, in October of that year, just a month and a half after Hasan Prishtina signed in Shkup (Skopje) an agreement with Ibrahim Pasha, opening the doors for the creation of an Ottoman Albania as a new factor in the Balkans, on which the new spheres of interest of the Great Powers would be built.

The armies of the Albanians’ neighbors, first the Montenegrins Serbian, and then the Greek, and later the Bulgarian began to settle accounts with the Albanian population, which together with the Ottoman army tried to defend their lands from the new invaders, whose intention was not “liberation” from the Ottoman invaders, as they said, but rather an occupation of the Albanian ethnicity and the destruction of its existence to the core. Although the Balkan countries, participants in that war, made efforts to prevent reports from the front lines, various European sources managed to point out the terrible proportions of the Golgotha through which the Albanian population was just passing through the invasions of Balkan armies in their territories.¹⁶⁸⁰

The same sources say that during the winter war of 1912/13, the Albanian population of Kosovo and that in Western Macedonia were exposed to genocide. More than 30,000 people, mostly young people, children and women, were killed in the military operations of the Serbian and Montenegrin armies, and 6,000 were taken prisoner in Serbian prisons, while more than 100,000 were deported to Turkey or Albania and other surrounding countries.

This ordeal continued during 1913, after the Conference of Ambassadors in London decided that Kosovo and other Albanian areas in Macedonia should belong to Serbia, and Chameria to Greece. The actions by the Serbian, Montenegrin, and Greek armies are well

¹⁶⁷⁹ See Buxhovi, Jusuf: “Kongresi i Berlinit dhe Lidhja shqiptare e 1878”, Prishtinë, 2012; Čubrilović, Vasa: “Iselevanje Arnauta”, Srpski Kulturni Klub, Beograd, 1937, published in “Delo”, Ljubljana, 1986.

¹⁶⁸⁰ For more see Leo Freundlich: “Albaniens Golgotha”, Wien, 1913; Novaković, Kosta: “Nacionalizacija i serbizacija Kosova”, Vjena, 1913.

known, taking place in the name of “fighting the Albanian gangs” to continue their policy to finally destroy the Albanian ethnicity in these parts.

As seen before, various methods were used to force Albanians to leave their lands. On this occasion, it was state terror that had to prepare the ground for the colonization of Albanian lands with Slavic population, so that within a short time its ethnic picture could be changed to the detriment of the Albanian one and in favor of the Slavic.

Since World War One would stop this process for a while, however, the twenties and forties will be used for this purpose. But this time, the means of open warfare, such as those during the Balkan Wars, were replaced by fighting against “terrorists” (this term included Kaçaks and all those who belonged to the National Resistance Movement against the Serbian occupation), and the state program for colonization, which would exploit agrarian reform and its many opportunities for depriving Albanians of their property, leaving them with no choice but to seek refuge by moving to Turkey or fleeing to Albania.

In these circumstances, it was the Serbian intellectual elite gathered around the “Serbian Cultural Club”, which continued to nurture Belgrade’s politics as well as its state apparatus with hegemonic ideas to bring “Načertanije” to life.

But, dissatisfied with the results of colonization, which in the mid-thirties, according to them, were significantly below expectations (in Kosovo about 10 thousand families of settlers moved in with 60 thousand people instead of the 140 thousand as planned) and more dissatisfied with the process of displacement of Albanians to Turkey and Albania (no more than 150 thousand were displaced, while it was predicted that in twenty years this number would have doubled), the Serbian intellectual elite raised concerns about the failure of national policy in Kosovo and in areas inhabited by Albanians in Macedonia. Because, according to them, it did not manage to change the ethnic picture in Kosovo and Macedonia in favor of the Serbs, threatening the Serbian national interests. Therefore, the only way out was to move the Albanians to Turkey and Albania en masse by reaching agreements with these two countries, especially with Turkey, which had already reached similar agreements with Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania for accepting the Turkish population, as it was being said, and its “repatriation” to Turkey.

In order for these agreements with Turkey to have the strongest possible “intellectual” backing, namely an internal social and political consensus, the Belgrade “Serbian Cultural Club” will see to it.

There will be a wide-ranging public debate on this issue, from which a national platform would be drawn up, which would be binding on the state and its further actions in this regard, especially as this policy had begun to lose the support of the state-constituting peoples: the Slovenes and Croats, and being opposed by the Yugoslav left, (Social Democrats and Communists), which, relying on the principles of proletarian internationalism and the ideological concepts of the Comintern, had begun to oppose this policy by calling it hegemonic and chauvinistic. Therefore, in these circumstances, the great Serbian hegemony needed a strong “defensive” propaganda from the “Albanian threat” and “their multiplication in the south”, which according to Dr. Borivoje Panjevac, Secretary General of State Statistics, “that risk will be increasingly greater for the Serbian element”.¹⁶⁸¹

Furthermore, Panjevac, opening this debate in the “*Serbian Cultural Club*”, warns that “the national feelings of Albanians is awakening”. According to him, “this awakening has suitable conditions, because the Albanian population is inhabited in compact areas and instead of being assimilated, as the state desires, in reality the opposite is happening.” He illustrates this with the fact that “the children of the settlers, instead of imposing the Serbian language on the children of the Albanians, the opposite is happening, as the Serbian children are learning Albanian, and so they are speaking Albanian, instead of them refusing to learn the language

¹⁶⁸¹ Hoxha, Hajredin: “*Politika e eliminimit të shqiptarëve nga trualli i Jugosllavisë së vjetër*”, “*Përparimi*”, Prishtinë, no. 5, 1970, p. 433.

and speak even if they know it. But the biggest danger lies in the fact (when mass burnings did not work), Albanians are increasingly showing Turkophile feelings, both among clerics who have so far been considered as Turks only, and ordinary people, who even in the most difficult moments, do not forget the language and the *plis*.”¹⁶⁸²

In addition, for Panjevac, the increase in birth rates among Albanians is alarming, instead of the opposite, in which case he mentions for the first time the issue of “biological expansion” as a “weapon” of Albanians, which will find extensive coverage by Vasa Čubrilović and his elaboration “*The Expulsion of Albanians*”, which will be discussed below, where the most racist theses will emerge, similar to those that the German Nazis, after coming to power, had already begun to turn into political programs to execute genocide against Jews in the late 1930s and 1940s.

Vasa Čubrilović’s paper “*The Expulsion of Albanians*” (Iselevanje Arnauta), held at the “Serbian Cultural Club” in Belgrade in March 1937, with what it stated and offered, seemed both “depressing” and “critical” at the same time. Since the Serbian national goals had not been achieved and the Yugoslav state had not used all the opportunities it had - in fact the Elaborate promoted an even more hegemonic state policy towards the Albanians than used until then, where state violence of a wide spectrum had to be combined with diplomatic and political methods in order to justify the displacement of Albanians not only as a strategic national interest to Serbs and Yugoslavs, but also internationally. Because keeping the “Albanian wedge” threatens the fate of the Central Balkans, especially the fate of the important Balkan traffic Morava-Vardar.”¹⁶⁸³

“The problem of the Albanians in the life of our country and people did not arise yesterday,” Čubrilović points out adding that “the Albanian triangle separated our ancient land of Rashka from Macedonia and the Vardar Valley”.

Though “Serbia began to slice off pieces of this Albanian wedge as early as the first uprising, by expelling the northernmost Albanian settlers from Jagodina”, whereupon “thanks to the wide-ranging national plans of Jovan Ristić, Serbia sliced off another piece of this wedge with the annexation of Toplica and Kosanica. At that time, the regions between Jastrebac and southern Morava were radically cleared of Albanians.”¹⁶⁸⁴

Of course, Čubrilović, who admits what Serbia has done against Albanians since Obrenovićs and others, tried to hide their ethnicity by declaring that it was “returning to Serbian lands” occupied “by the Ottomans”. At the same time, he criticizes the Yugoslav state for not continuing with the same intensity as it did during the wars of 1876-1878. ...

By saying that “from 1918 onwards, it was the task of our present state to suppress what remained of the Albanian triangle”, Čubrilović also does not criticize the previous methods of colonization, which were not able to do more, but rather demands a new behavior, that of their mass displacement, which must be done through the brutal force of an organized state.

“The Albanians cannot be dispelled by means of gradual colonization alone,” because they are the only people who, over the last millennium, managed not only to resist the nucleus of our state, but also to expand.”¹⁶⁸⁵

Therefore, seeing these developments, which are alarming for Čubrilović, since “if we do not settle the score with them once and for all, within 20-30 years we shall have to cope with a terrible irredentism, the signs of which are already apparent and will inevitably put all our southern territories in jeopardy.”¹⁶⁸⁶

Since colonization has failed, Čubrilović demands for the method of mass displacement of Albanians.

¹⁶⁸² Idem, p. 433.

¹⁶⁸³ For more see: Čubrilović, Vasa: “*Iselevanje Arnauta*”, Beograd, 1937, “Delo”, Ljubljana, 1986.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Idem.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Idem.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Idem.

“Turkey has agreed, initially, to accept about 200,000 of our displaced persons on condition that they are Albanians, something which is most advantageous to us. We must comply with Turkey’s wish immediately and sign a convention for the resettlement of the Albanian population as soon as possible.”¹⁶⁸⁷

Aware that this could cause some international concern, Čubrilović says “this issue should not be a cause for concern; the evacuation of a few hundred thousand Albanians will not set off a world war.” Rather, for the author of the elaboration, “the greatest danger lies in the possibility that our great allies, France and Britain, may interfere”. But, as for other issues there is an answer for this too, he says continuing “these two countries must be given the calm and resolute reply that the security of the Morava-Vardar line is in their interests. That this is so was confirmed during the last Great War and that line can only be made more secure, for them and for us, if in ethnic terms, we completely dominate the region around the Sharr Mountains and Kosovo.”¹⁶⁸⁸

But, according to Čubrilović and his many associates from the ranks of the Serbian political and intellectual elite, in order for the project of mass displacement of Albanians to succeed, the circumstances that must be created for this process to be put on a successful track are also important. Therefore, in order to achieve mass displacement, according to Čubrilović, it is important to create an appropriate psychosis, which can be shaped in many ways, and as a precondition he emphasizes the way of winning over the clergy and influential people, as he says, “through money and threats,” continuing that “agitators must be found as quickly as possible to promote the evacuation,” and that “our press can be of colossal assistance.”

This propaganda had to include continued praising of Turkey and the easy and pleasant life to be had there, in which an important place should be given to the religious issue and the connection of Albanians to it.¹⁶⁸⁹

In addition to this precondition, however, for Čubrilović, the state and its apparatus remain important, which should act “as to make staying intolerable for the Albanians”. Among the tasks to be performed he mentions: fines, imprisonment, ruthless application of all police regulations, compulsory labor and any other measure that an experienced police force can contrive. These measures should include legal and economic ones: the refusal to recognize land deeds, the ruthless collection of taxes and the payment of all private and public debts, the requisitioning of all public and municipal pasture land, the cancellation of concessions, the withdrawal of permits to exercise an occupation, dismissal from government, private and municipal offices etc.¹⁶⁹⁰

Important for making the lives of Albanians miserable so that they can move as soon as possible and in large numbers were also “sanitary measures”, which included some unbearable measures, such as pulling down of encircling walls and high hedges around private houses, touching on the internal family honor, and the rigorous implementation of veterinary measures which will result in a ban on selling livestock on the market, and other measures, including those of demolition of their cemeteries, the prohibition of marriages and other humiliation they had to face in daily life.¹⁶⁹¹

Another aspect of state violence had to be reflected in the distribution of weapons to the colonists, so that in these areas the old Chetnik action could be organized again. To this end, Čubrilović calls for permanent provocation of the Albanian population by Montenegrin settlers, who must be brought there to create open conflicts with the Albanians in Dukagjin, in order to create a psychosis as if the Albanians had revolted, so that then, state violence to extinguish it would be used. Čubrilović demands that the state and its people incite local

¹⁶⁸⁷ Idem.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Idem.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Idem.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Idem.

¹⁶⁹¹ Idem.

turmoil, which will be bloodily suppressed by more efficient means, but not so much by army as by settlers, by Montenegrin tribes and by Chetniks.¹⁶⁹²

And as a last resort, the goal must be achieved, according to Čubrilović: “There remains one more method Serbia employed with great practical effect after 1878, that is, secretly razing Albanian villages and urban settlements to the ground.”¹⁶⁹³

An important issue for Čubrilović is the organization of the displacement of Albanians, in order to achieve strategic goals. Therefore, he proposes the districts to be relocated, as well as the progress to be followed, in the first place to consider the relocation of villages and then cities. “The villages are the more dangerous, being more compact.” He says, removing only the poor should be avoided and the middle and wealthy classes should also move out. “Only in this way will it be possible to create a proper flow of Albanian evacuees and empty the south of them.” Because, “by saving neither blood nor money, our state could create a new Toplica out of Kosovo and Metohija”.¹⁶⁹⁴

The mention of the creation of a “new Toplica” out of Kosovo and Metohija has to do with the repetition of the model of mass ethnic cleansing by means of a “blitz-Krieg”, such as the Serb-Ottoman War of 1876/7 and that of exploiting the Russo-Ottoman war of 1878, when Serbia would return militarily to Toplica and carry out its last ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population there, erasing all traces of an entity.

Evidently, Čubrilović will mention this scenario a few years later, on the eve of the end of World War Two, when he will come up with another elaboration, “*The Problem of Minorities in the New Yugoslavia*”. In November 1944, he would present his second elaborate to the top leadership of the Yugoslav National Liberation Anti-Fascist Movement to resolve the issue of the Hungarian and Albanian minorities on the pretext that they were collaborators of fascism.

In addition to Čubrilović’s elaboration on the “Displacement of Albanians”, as an important reference of the Yugoslav-Turkish Convention on the Displacement of Albanians to Turkey, various views on this topic continued to emerge in the “Serbian Cultural Club”, a common denominator of which the Yugoslav state remained, which had to act by all means towards the displacement of Albanians to Turkey and possibly Albania. Among many such views, there were those which, in addition to moving abroad, also envisaged Albanians to be displaced from their ethnicity to other parts of the country, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Djoka Perina, Head of the League of Serbian Cooperatives in Sarajevo, proposes a cyclical displacement within the state. According to him, such a change of the Albanian population does not require large funds, while they would be lost in the vast Slavic sea.¹⁶⁹⁵

The opening of the Albanian issue in the “*Serbian Cultural Club*” and its “solution” through the mass displacement that the state had to take over, creating in advance the internal circumstances for the process to be put into action by state terror, including even the most extreme means such as the escalation of conflicts and turmoil to which the dimension of “separatist uprisings” should be given, so that in this way, in the name of the right to protection of the state, justify the use of means of war, speaks of the difficult situation in which Albanians were during the Serb-Yugoslav occupation, caused by the great Serbian hegemonic policy of this country. Not only did it no longer hide its intentions to eliminate them by force, but it demanded that these state programs, be turned into a priority of state policy, so that, as Čubrilović said in his elaboration, they could receive an appropriate outcome, as it could be a future world war, or a socialist revolution, that in the near future would possibly bring a stop to them.

¹⁶⁹² Idem.

¹⁶⁹³ Idem.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Idem.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Hoxha, Hajredin: “*Politika e eliminimit të shqiptarëve nga trualli i Jugosllavisë së vjetër*”, in “*Përparimi*”, no. 5, 1970, p. 434.

Evidently, it will be World War Two that will stop this process for a while.

Of course, in this development, in addition to external factors, which played a perhaps decisive role, will be the commitment of the Albanians themselves, to resist the Serbian hegemonic programs by all means (from armed resistance to arduous involvement in the political life of the country). Čubrilović himself will admit this when he claims on the one hand “Albanian nationalism which is growing in our lands”, and on the other hand, “it was the fertility of Albanian women who had defeated the policy of our colonization.”

THE “CEMIYET” OF SHKUP AND EFFORTS TO ASSIMILATE ALBANIANS THROUGH ISLAMIZATION

In addition to the armed resistance to the Serbian occupation, such as that during 1912-1913 and later, as reflected in the Kaçak movement and other forms of popular resistance, which greatly slowed down the process of colonization of Kosovo and of the Albanian territories in Macedonia to bring it to the brink of failure, there will be the involvement of Albanians in the political life of the country, as another form resisting their relocation to Turkey and other countries in accordance with hegemonic programs of the Serbs, which Belgrade had imposed on the Yugoslav state.

Although the involvement of Albanians in the political life of the country was specific, because it, on the one hand, took place in extraordinary conditions that Albanians went through when a sophisticated state terror was taking place against them so that they would be displaced as much as possible and as soon as possible. and on the other hand, from a political point of view, it turned it into a tragic farce among the most unparalleled of all time, yet it, in spite of all its flaws and weaknesses and in spite of the inevitable manipulations it went through, must be seen as part of an overall resistance against their displacement to Turkey. Without this segment, of course, the displacement of Albanians to Turkey and other countries would not only reach its maximum, but would also help the disintegration of the Albanian ethnicity in these areas, the remnants of which would join some “Muslim” or similar creation that would then be presented as an “Islamized Slavic substrate”, to whom “opportunities were being created to express its root identity”!

But despite these special conditions, the involvement of Albanians in the country’s political life will practically begin after 1920, when the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom declared parliamentarism, to which, at least formally, Albanians were also subject, although they were not recognized as having a national identity, but only a religious one (as Muslims, which on this premise could declare themselves as Turks). It can even be said that the SKS Kingdom was interested in some symbolic participation of Albanians (of course as a population of the Muslim faith), despite its well-known hegemonic and chauvinist policy towards them, which the Serbs imposed on them as a state-forming people, having the key say in the Karadjordjević dynasty. Because, through parliamentarism, they created an impression before the world as a place where all citizens, without distinction, were equal in political and economic life. Meanwhile, at the domestic level, by separating a group of feudal lords from the broad popular strata and turning them into toys of Serbian nationalist parties with which they won votes, confidence was lost in any future, which could further encourage displacement to Turkey or elsewhere.

However, Albanians, even if officially treated as “Turks”, “Muslims” or otherwise, as far as they were in Kosovo, Macedonia, and their lands included in the SKS Kingdom, appeared as

electorate, which turned them into a “capital” of political parties, with which a good number of deputies could be won (up to 20, a number that was equal to close to 9% of the total number of seats in parliament), which had to be tied to some counter-value, no matter what it was. Thus, from 1919, in addition to the Radical Party of Nikola Pašić, which continued its activity starting during the time of the Serbian Kingdom, in the area of Kosovo and Western Macedonia (initially included in the regions, where that of Skopje was the most large and later into banovinas: that of Zeta, Morava and Vardar), the Democratic Party of Svetozar Pribičević, which was founded in Sarajevo and its program deviated from the bourgeois concepts of Western Europe, will also appear. There were also left-wing socialist parties, which displayed ideological programs, the Social Democrats and the Communists with slogans about class equality, while sharply criticizing the hegemonic great-Serbian politics and the royal dynasty, the party that will be seen with “Obznan” will soon be banned, and go into underground.

In these circumstances, the Radicals and Democrats remained the main contenders for the Kosovo and Macedonian electorates. The Democratic Party, although with a Serbian nationalist view, at least declaratively, tried to affirm in its program the idea of a common Yugoslav state on a centralist basis. This party, which felt as “state-building”, tried to harmonize national unitarism with state interests, but largely by favoring the Serbian bourgeoisie.¹⁶⁹⁶

Viewed from this angle, the Democratic Party seemed further away from the Albanian electorate of Kosovo and Macedonia, from the Radical Party of Pašić, because the latter, despite its nationalist program, since the Country Conference to be held in September 1920, draws some new conclusions about its program, adapting it to new circumstances. On this occasion, the Radicals stated that they were committed to the principle of self-government in the provinces, communes, districts and regions, to the extent that the state community was not put to the test. This party also foresaw the preservation of private property, the protection of private capital and stimulated capitalism, which was attractive to the feudal class, interested in preserving property, but also capital.

Moreover, this party, in its initiative activities in Kosovo and Macedonia, called on Albanians to join, promising they would be equal in education, culture, economy and all other areas, including provincial self-government and in municipalities, where local interests will be paramount.¹⁶⁹⁷

These and similar promises prompted some of the local Albanian leaders to show interest in the party, with which they began cooperating. This will be supported by the fact that the leader of this party, Pašić, was in power and kept the peaks of the country’s politics, causing it to turn into a state party.

But for certain Albanian political forces, from the ranks of the few feudal lords or the Islamic clergy, despite the difficult circumstances the Albanian population was going through, faced with open discrimination, including violence and state terror that took place in the name of enforcing the Law on the Protection of the State and other decrees "against terrorism", in Shkup (Skopje) the first political party was formed named “*Islamic Association muhavazi hukug*”, or “*Cemiyet*”, which Albanians also called “*Bashkimi*” (“*Unity*”).

Its founding assembly was held on December 18, 1919. The founding assembly was attended by 64 participants. Nexhip Draga, a worthy fighter of the Albanian National

¹⁶⁹⁶ For more on the Democratic Party see Gavrilović, Branislav: “*Demokratska stranka*“, Beograd, 1970.

¹⁶⁹⁷ For more on the Radical Party see Mitrović, Živan: “*Srpske političke stranke*“, Beograd, 1939.

Movement (MP in the Ottoman Parliament) was elected its chairman, Sheh Sadedini, deputy chairman, and Aqif Blyta from Gjakova, secretary. The official policy of the SKS Kingdom assessed the assembly as the “*Congress of Southern Muslims*”, consisting of “*Turks, Islamized Slavs, and Arnauts*”.¹⁶⁹⁸

In fact, “Cemiyet” wore a religious (Islamic) cloak, of Turkish orientation (its newspaper “Hak” will be published in Turkish and Serbian), while it was known for representing and protecting the interests of Albanians.

This disguise was necessary because the SKS Kingdom did not recognize the Albanian nationality, while allowing the Turkish one, it accepted “Islamic identity”, which was allowed to be reflected in the social, cultural, but also political plain by which it had to be eliminated, but also to fight to the last point, the Albanian identity, even as unaccepted.

Of course, within this construct and in these circumstances, where the “decorum of freedom of religious expression” excluded national (Albanian) identity, the protection of the interests of Albanians, at least in the social and economic plain, and protection from discrimination and organized displacement, emerged as the top priority.

This party, however, was unable to maintain its autonomy, as it was at the crossroads of two rival Serbian parties in this area: the Radical and the Democratic parties, which were interested in the electorate of the Banovina, which included Albanians (Zeta, Morava, and especially Vardar with its capital Skopje), but to do so in some way, preserving “Cemiyet”, not as a coalition partner, but as a vassal, with tasks assigned in exchange for a reward. But even as such, “Cemiyet” had a narrowing space, especially after the statements against the displacement of Albanians and the request for the return of Albanian Muhajirs, made by MP Ferhat Ali Draga in the Yugoslav Parliament, which he also deposited at the Hague Conference.¹⁶⁹⁹

This statement pushed Belgrade to work to destroy this party from within by creating various factions, but also with through pressure from outside, leading to its destruction four years later, even to the imprisonment of Ferhat Ali Draga.¹⁷⁰⁰

As a result of these pressures, as two or three factions emerged demanding that the party return to its religious cause, at the Second Congress in 1921, the party changed its name to the “Muslim Organization of Southern Serbia of the SKS Kingdom”, which clearly showed that Belgrade did not want any political organization of Albanians, except the religious one, which was necessary for them, on the one hand, to eradicate any national consciousness and on the other hand, strengthen their religious and of being “Turks”. With it, they could move freely out, an issue that for a part of the population that could not withstand discrimination and permanent state violence that was exercised against it, or unable to adapt to the new circumstances, to get an opportunity to leave the country.

In line with this orientation imposed on it by the state, the organizational structure of this party, was rounded up in the Third Congress, on April 4, 1922, on which occasion it already had the character of a broad association, which included all the political currents in which Albanians were involved without having the right to be politically identified as such. Thus, 11 Albanian deputies elected to the Yugoslav parliament attended the Congress. The congress elected Qenan Zija from Manastir as chairman, Ismet Bey Kemali, a Gjakova MP, as deputy chairman, and

¹⁶⁹⁸ See: “*Arhiv Vojnog Instituta Istorije Jugosllavije*” (AVII), P. IV/3, Box 54, doc. 228/2.

¹⁶⁹⁹ See: Osmani, Jusuf: “*Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941*”, II, 2016, pp. 93-96, 88-111.

¹⁷⁰⁰ See: newspaper “*Pravda*”, 18. 01. 1925.

Kemal Osmani from Shkup as treasurer. From the areas of Kosovo, representatives in the congress were: from Prishtina Haxhi Xhemajl Efendija and Sylejman Haxhi Efendija, from Gjilan Hysein Agë Okllani and Sherif Bajrami, from Peja Nazif Bej, from Pazar Aqif Haxhi Ahmeti. Sali Jusufi also participated in the Congress as a representative of Llap. At the Congress, it was decided that “Hak” would be published every day in Turkish, and twice a week in Serbian. The newspaper was to be edited and published in Belgrade.¹⁷⁰¹

This determination was important for the Yugoslav government, to use such a newspaper, to impose on the Albanians the Turkish consciousness together with the Serbian one, just as Čubrilović would say, “Albanians should be convinced that they belong to the East and Islamic consciousness”.¹⁷⁰²

Before these developments took place, Kosovo and Macedonia, already administratively divided into several districts connected to districts in Serbia (Zeta, Morava and Vardar), they entered the first parliamentary elections: in the municipal elections in August 1920 and the parliamentary elections of November 28, 1920, which at the same time had to be used to demonstrate Belgrade’s hegemonic policy in these parts, in favor of a further creation of psychosis for the displacement of Albanians.

In these circumstances, in the districts of Gračanica, Zvečan, Shkup (Skopje), and Manastir (Bitola), which included all the settlements of Kosovo and Western Macedonia, four parties ran in the parliamentary elections: the Radical Party, the Democratic Party, Communist Party and Cemiyet. The latter was in coalition with the Radical Party, and managed to get three deputies, one of them Albanian (Mehmed Ali Mahmuti). These four parties won 18 seats, of which 10 Serbs and 8 Albanians. It is worth mentioning that in Kosovo there were 85,159 registered voters, while 46,561 people went to the polls. Democratic Party won 9 seats (four Albanians: Sherif Bajrami, Ramush Osmani, Sefedin Mahmutbegu and Ismet Karabegu), Radical Party won three seats (one Albanian: Musa Sheh Zade), Communist Party won three seats (one Albanian, Ethem Bylbyli of Zvečan).¹⁷⁰³

The 1920 parliamentary elections, although remaining within the framework of an electoral race, nevertheless, during and after their holding, turned into a manifestation of great Serbian hegemony, where anti-Albanian spirit was demonstrated. This atmosphere came to the fore, especially after the announcement of the final results. Pašić’s radicals, desperate that they had not received more than three deputies (they had calculated that they would get 12-13), returned to the well-known methods of settling accounts with Albanians. This time, in February 1921, after demonstrating in Prishtina and other streets of Kosovo’s cities, threatening bloodshed, the Belgrade police led by the Radicals, under the pretext of clearing the country of the Kaçaks, as a gendarme had been killed recently (though this was not confirmed by the Albanian population saying no “war” with the Kaçaks happened at all as the alarm rang on all four sides), entered Llap and committed a true genocide, killing and massacring hundreds of Albanians. Similar actions were taken in several Albanian towns and villages, where the actions of the gendarmerie accompanied by local Chetniks gathered around the “patriotic” association

¹⁷⁰¹ See: “*Iz Istorije Jugoslavije*”, Beograd, 1958, p. 199.

¹⁷⁰² See Čubrilović, Vasa: “*Shpërngulja e Arnautëve*” (document) at Verli, Marenglen, op. cit., pp. 183-185.

¹⁷⁰³ See: “*Arhiv Jugoslavije*” (Archive of Yugoslavia), signature 14, fascicle 15/18, dossier 1129, and 27625.

“Bela ruka”, founded by the Radicals “for protection from terrorists”, were justified by the “terror” of the Kaçaks.¹⁷⁰⁴

The first legislature, convened on December 8, 1920, brought about the first changes, which went to the detriment of democracy and to the benefit of the strengthening of unitarism led by the Serbian parties (Radical and Democratic). These parties imposed a new constitution, which also enacted the law “On the protection of the state”, which excluded the labor movement from democracy and the left. With this law, minorities were also banned from political parties, as well as a discriminatory platform for their political participation in the parties of “state-forming peoples” was passed. Among them were the signing of the declaration of state loyalty, declaration of readiness to be involved in war “against terrorism” and the recognition of the Serbian language and script. The latter excluded a large part of the Albanian population from any political activity of this nature as well as the right to be elected, as those who could meet this condition were counted on fingers.

In these circumstances, the violence of the Radicals began in Kosovo and Macedonia, who, as the ruling party, which included the deputies of “Cemiyet”, undertook an extensive campaign of demonstration of power as a state party, demanding that Albanians be forcibly imposed without being left with an alternative. In line with this definition, the Radicals established the party’s branches in all the cities of Kosovo and Macedonia, forcibly including in its leadership influential people, and also others, who were forced to declare they “voluntarily” joined the party. Its flag, “Bela Ruka” falang (Chetnik paramilitary unit attached to the royal court), brought citizens to the party’s rallies and forced them to join. Even in local councils of radicals, Albanians were forced to deliver welcoming speeches in favor of this party.¹⁷⁰⁵

This led to Cemiyet’s coalition with the Radicals in the 1923 election, a “connection” that was completely unnatural and harmful to it, though imposed and intended to destroy it. This happened two years later, when the Radicals will not be able to monitor all the actions of its leaders, especially the authorities, such as Ferhat Ali Draga, who will try to use the parliamentary space to extract highlighting the plight of Albanians as well as state violence against them.¹⁷⁰⁶

His stances against the displacement of Albanians in Turkey and the agrarian reform, which was in the service of the colonization of Kosovo with Serbs and to the detriment of Albanians, will be known, but also the statements and protests on the occasion of organized violence against Albanians by Radical and Democrat militants as well as the “Bela Ruka” (“White Hand”), which organized “patriotic” campaigns against “terrorists”, declaring “terrorist” militants all those Albanians who disagreed with Belgrade’s repressive policies and standing against their displacement to Turkey. Although in a coalition with the Radicals, Ferhat Draga, who was described by Democrats and others as a “tool of the radicals”, began publicizing the agreement of these two “enemy” parties in the country over state terror in Kosovo, which closely co-operated on the matter. As evidence, he brought before the Yugoslav parliament the case of the municipal elections of August 1923, when throughout Kosovo, especially in Prishtina and Mitrovica, these parties organized state terror against Albanians. “I do not consider all those who used terror during the municipal elections to be either radicals or

¹⁷⁰⁴ On the massacres committed in Kosovo during February-April 1921 see newspapers “*Pravda*”, February 1921, “*Hak*”, February 1921, and “*Samouprava*”, 3 February 1921.

¹⁷⁰⁵ For more see newspaper “*Samouprava*” February-March 1922.

¹⁷⁰⁶ See: Osmani, Jusuf: “*Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941*”, II, III, Prishtinë, 2016.

democrats, because they are bloodthirsty, because an oppressor is always an oppressor. It is a shame and disgrace that so much blood is shed among us in Prishtina and Mitrovica, and this happening on Election Day.”¹⁷⁰⁷

On this occasion, Draga also explained the reasons why he was determined to associate with the Radicals, which according to him was inevitable in order to achieve certain goals. “We have not asked the Radical Party for anything more than what the Constitution guarantees us and the existing laws allow. From all this we have gained nothing, even though the Constitution guarantees us. We cannot open schools in our mother tongue, although the law allows it.”¹⁷⁰⁸

However, Ferhat Draga, more than anyone else, is hostile to his “allies” because he will criticize, but also curb, the displacement of Albanians to Turkey, this very important objective of Belgrade’s hegemonic policy. In addition to denouncing state militants who openly act to terrorize the Albanian population, such as Milić Krsta in the Istog district, who he says “armed to the teeth, kills at will”, Draga denounced the Agrarian Reform, which was openly used as a means of colonizing Kosovo with Serbs and other Slavic peoples. “We are not against agrarian reform. Let it be applied in those places where there is little population. We consider that first of all the land should be given to our natives, who are farmers and do not have enough land, and then what remains to the settlers, valuable farmers, good farmers, if necessary. But in the ranks of the settlers now, most of them are not for agriculture, such as in Dukagjin, where there are cases when the settler takes up his gun, a lute and sits in the shade, while Albanians toil the land under pressure and “authority” of the rifle. There are cases when the Albanian sows, reaps, and makes stacks, and then the colon takes them to his own threshing place. All this is done with a certain purpose to shock the Albanian population and make them leave.”¹⁷⁰⁹

Draga protested by saying that “the problem of minorities, in this case Albanians, is bringing disastrous consequences for them. The tendency for Albanians to melt is not possible. The melting of this population and displacement will never become a reality.”¹⁷¹⁰

These and similar statements by Ferhat Ali Draga, as well as the ongoing articles of the newspaper “*Hak*” on organized crime against the Albanian population in Kosovo, carried out under the directives of special military and police services, which however did not remain unnoticed for the internal public of the country, and also abroad, made by “*Cemiyet*”, and its leaders, Ferhat Draga and others, who did not agree with what was happening in Kosovo and other parts inhabited by Albanians, made Radicals and Democrats (especially the first to control power), to start the scenario for the destruction of “*Cemiyet*” and political liquidation of Ferhat Ali Draga and other leaders, although they, since the beginning of the obligatory cooperation with these parties, had been condemned as “collaborators” of the Radicals, which had reduced their authority to a part of the Albanians, being looked down as “their tools”.

The order to bring down “*Cemiyet*” and its leaders, primarily Draga, came from Pašić, who had sent to Kosovo and Macedonia his emissary, Toma Popović, who tried to win over a part of “*Cemiyet*” from the ranks of the fanatic Muslims, linked to the clergy, linking it directly to the Radicals. Of course, this connection had to be made with promises and some favors that would offered to them, while the division from within, with mutual accusations and counter-accusations amongst them, would remain a permanent tool. Since other factors had already

¹⁷⁰⁷ See “*Hak*” newspaper, 17 October 1923.

¹⁷⁰⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁷⁰⁹ “*Hak*”, no. 689.

¹⁷¹⁰ “*Hak*” no. 693.

begun to mix fingers amongst the Albanians (especially Croats who sought allies against the increasingly pronounced tendencies of Serbian hegemonic politics), Pašić's Radicals, as well as the Democrats, sought to prevent this by any means. This further increased the commitment of these parties to undermine any authority among Albanians, who would at least despise the use of the Yugoslav political scene for this purpose. In this regard, the Serbian political parties fully agreed, and as will be seen, they were left to share their tasks, so that this would be achieved as soon as possible and through most brutal means, so that with the collapse of the Albanian authorities two goals would be achieved at the same time: removing from the political scene of those outside Serbian surveillance and discouraging Albanians from doing so, losing any hope of surviving somehow by joining the country's alliances against Serb hegemony, forced to move out permanently. Here, it became quite clear, what will be proved later, that for Serbian hegemony, the political scene in Kosovo, Macedonia and other parts of Yugoslavia was not for political purposes, much less for the benefit of parliamentarism, but rather to demonstrate the violence by which the act of democracy had to be turned into a tool for the fulfillment of national hegemonic programs, expressed by Garašanin's "*Načertanije*" to achieve the morbid elaborations that the Serbian intellectual elite would draft, such as that of Čubrilović, which will be presented a little later in the "Serbian Cultural Club", as discussed earlier.

In fact, this determination, which will later become the cause of the destruction of the Versailles Yugoslavia, began to be tested in Kosovo and Macedonia, and with the Albanians, and then with the others (Croats, Slovenes), as was the case with the execution of Croatian political leader Stjepan Radić in the Yugoslav parliament. This "sample" started with "Cemiyet" and its main leaders, although they were used all the time "as partners" of the coalition, they will fall, precisely because the Serbian unitary and hegemonic parties will understand very well that even in the circumstances of a forced "cooperation" with these parties, even in the circumstances of a vassal behavior by them, this not only did not suit them, but the opposite, because among Albanians, as Čubrilović stated in his famous elaboration "The Emigration of Albanians", the state of survival, even as oppressed, will "increase the nationalist consciousness of Albanians and with it irredentism as an inevitable phenomenon".¹⁷¹¹

This desperate assessment, which led the Serbian hegemonic policy towards the most radical steps, i.e. the elimination of the Albanian issue through state violence and their mass displacement, as will be done in real time, for Pašić and others, could go through several stages in advance: from using them for the purposes of Serbian political parties, as will happen until 1925, elimination of their political parties as a whole and the merging of the Albanian electorate into Serbian parties, as it happened from 1925 to 1938 and finally, the determination to remove them completely from any political animation, as it happened from 1938 to 1941.

However, Pašić and his associates, from 1925, managed to demolish "Cemiyet" from the inside, even though in 1922, with the change of name to the "*Muslim Organization of Southern Serbia in the SKS Kingdom*", they had imposed on it a religious character and Turkish identity, forcing them to cultivate but religious identity and Turkish nationality, thus paving the way for their mass displacement through agreements with Turkey. This action, however, had to be accompanied by harsh measures of state terror against the Albanians, to be crowned with the elimination and imprisonment of the leaders of this party. The announcement of this action was made by the newspaper "*Hak*", which will also experience the "Cemiyet's" fate. "It's been a

¹⁷¹¹ For more see Čubrilović, Vasa: "*Iselavanje Arnauta*", Beograd, 1937.

decade since the rod of the radical oligarchy mercilessly beat and chased everything that no longer crosses radically and does not breathe like the radicals do. Especially recently, radical supporters are arming themselves to continue the terror. The power of the radicals is poorly known because social property was distributed by its power, tribal (popular) chauvinism was instigated, and all honest people in the southern parts were persecuted.”¹⁷¹²

The state terror of the Radicals is confirmed by a letter from the German consul in Belgrade, Wolfbeck, sent to the German Foreign Ministry, stating that before the elections the government had started terrorizing and that Pašić and Pribičević were directly involved. It stated that the fierce terror was evident especially in the region of Kosovo and that of Dukagjin.¹⁷¹³

The same source says that terror was also being practiced against “Cemiyet’s” councils in the cities, in which case the government managed to destroy them by forcing their leaders to move to Turkey. There were cases, such as in Gjakova, Peja, Istog, Drenica, and others, when they were declared as Kaçaks.¹⁷¹⁴

In order to extinguish “Cemiyet”, or as it was called among Albanians “Bashkimi”, Pašić decided to first send to prison Ferhat Ali Draga. Draga was imprisoned on January 21, 1925 by order of the mayor of Mitrovica, who communicated the decision to him personally. He was given a speedy, mostly political, sentence that found him “guilty” and sentenced him to 20 years in prison. The indictment charged him with killing Serbs during World War One, but was soon amnestied by the King along with Bedri Pejani. He was imprisoned again in 1927, but was again released on a “pardon”. In addition to Draga, several people with authority were imprisoned. Police also launched a large-scale raid on several Albanian MPs, targeting the main authorities.¹⁷¹⁵

Although the trials against Ferhat Ali Draga were aimed at removing him from politics, the major changes in the country’s political scene and the need for its actors to play with the card of the local authorities, made Draga return to political life, though not in the foreground as before, but doing so by engaging in educational life through state madrassas, even though they cultivated “Islamic religious identity” in the Serbian language.¹⁷¹⁶

Since it was a reference of almost all political groups in the country, changing the form but not the content, Draga “from the shadows” influenced these relations and even set the direction for some. In recent years, he helped Stojadinović’s government have as many supporters as

¹⁷¹² See newspaper “Hak”, no. 694.

¹⁷¹³ Avramovski, Žarko: “Diplomatski izveštaji”, doc. 79, 85.

¹⁷¹⁴ Idem.

¹⁷¹⁵ See report of “Politika” newspaper on 1 February 1925.

¹⁷¹⁶ Notably, between the two world wars, under the occupation of the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenia and Yugoslavia afterwards, they were denied the right to education in their mother tongue. In the absence of Albanian schools, Albanian children received their education in private religious schools, respectively *mektepes*. In addition to the mektepes, private madrasas operated in the territory of the Ulema Assembly in Skopje, such as the “Atak Madrasa” in Gjilan, the “Medah Madrasa” in Skopje, the “Pirmaz Madrasa” in Prishtina, the “Gazi Ali Bey Madrasa” in Vushtrri, “Madrasa e Madhe” in Gjakova, “Madrasa Mehmed Pasha” in Prizren, “Madrasa Haxhi Pllana” in Ferizaj, etc. In 1925, the Government of Belgrade, as it was said, for the needs of the “Muslims of Southern Serbia” opened the Great Madrasa “King Alexander I”. This school was funded by the state and as such it had the same status as other state high schools. With the amendment of the Constitution of the “Islamic Religious Community” of 1936, a madrasa named “The Reformed Gazi Isa Bey Madrasa” was opened in Skopje. From 1937, this high religious institution was led by the Albanian national wing led by Ferhat Draga, Sherif Langu, Mulla Idriz Gjilani, Bedri Hamidi, Autallah ef. Kurtishi, and others. Unlike the Great Madrasa, this Madrasa, although operating for a short time (five years), produced a considerable number of cadres, who would later be at the forefront of the Albanian national movement, such as: Azem Marana, Hilmi Shehu, Abdylqerim Saiti, Ramadan Agushi, Idriz Idrizi, and many others, who, immediately after the Second World War, founded the Albanian National Democratic Organization. (See: Lita Qerim: “Territoret lindore shqiptare 1912-1920” (“Eastern Albanian territories 1912-1920”), Shkup, 2016, pp. 36-39).

possible among Albanians, as this had to do with his course, which was differed from the traditional pro-France Belgrade policies, leaning rather on the Axis countries, Germany and Italy.

In this atmosphere the February 1925 elections were held, in which the government came out united in a “national bloc” composed of Radicals and Democrats, whose motto was “the fight against anti-state persons”, which translated into social and political reality meant war “against the Albanians”. This led to the unleashing of the army and gendarmerie on Election Day in Kosovo, which was to secure a majority in government. Thus, during the elections, not only arrests of Albanian authorities took place, but also members of their families were imprisoned.¹⁷¹⁷

A practically state of emergency was imposed on Kosovo during the 1925 elections, which was won by the most extreme Serb forces: the Radicals and the Republicans, caused it to spread to other parts of the country. The Serbian nationalist-hegemonic bloc already felt threatened by any democratization of the country, so the model of Kosovo began to be transferred to other parts, especially to Croatia, where the nucleus was being created that could overthrow the great Serbian hegemony. Therefore, it was natural for these developments to lead to the assassination of Stjepan Radić, the leader of the “Croatian Peasant Party” in the Yugoslav parliament. Taking advantage of this situation to promote a monarchical dictatorship, the King dissolved the Assembly and on January 6, 1929 annulled the 1921 Constitution. In fact, the King did nothing but fulfill the desire of the Serbian hegemonic bourgeoisie to declare a homogeneous Serbia instead of a homogeneous Yugoslavia.¹⁷¹⁸

As for Kosovo and Macedonia, the dictatorship of January 6 brought an even worse situation. Political and social circumstances became even more difficult, the Albanian population was subjected to a more powerful denationalization policy, while torture against it increased, colonization and displacement became even more widespread.¹⁷¹⁹

The monarchical dictatorship, in a way, but under the guise of parliamentarism, continued even after the king formally proclaimed the Constitution on September 3. In accordance with it, on November 8, 1931, parliamentary elections were announced for the Yugoslav assembly. According to the law, Kosovo was divided into four voting zones and could give 15 deputies. Compared to the previous one, when it could produce up to 22 deputies, this time its representation in the Parliament was significantly narrowed.

However, the new Constitution influenced the changes in the political scene, not only in the qualitative aspect, but rather in the formal one, as the former actors Radicals and Republicans lost their influence, while their space will be occupied by the parties led by the royal court. Thus, the “*Yugoslav National Party*” (Jugoslovenska Nacionalna Stranka) took the stage. In addition to the ruling party, the “*Yugoslav People’s Party*” (Jugoslovenska Narodna Stranka) emerged, allegedly to represent a certain opposition, though remaining in many ways its partner, being led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the police. However, this gathered around itself millionaires and capitalists, who focused on an economic plain.

After the parliamentary elections of November 1931, which brought to power the monarchist bloc, with continued dictatorship under the guise of parliamentarism, came those of 1935, making up a total of four lists: that of the royal bloc with the government list of Prime

¹⁷¹⁷ Čulinović, Ferdo: “*Jugoslavija između dva rata*“, Zagreb, 1961.

¹⁷¹⁸ Novaković, Kosta: “*Nacionalizam i srbizacija Kosova*“, Vjena, 1931.

¹⁷¹⁹ Bajrami, Hakif: “*Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1941*“, Prishtinë, 1981, p. 247.

Minister Jevtić, that of the united opposition represented by the Slovenian Maček, a third list represented by the “Pašićs”, i.e. the former radicals, who had lost their space but maintained influence in certain Serbian hegemonists’ circles, being still militants in favor of the policies of Albanian displacement to Turkey, whose Chetniks continued to operate in Kosovo under the direction of the Belgrade police and the army. The last list was that of “Zbor”, represented by the Croatian Lotić, with fascist ideas. All these lists were presented in all the districts of Kosovo.¹⁷²⁰

In these elections, as expected, the ruling (i.e. royal) party, which won the needed number of deputies to dominate the parliamentary life without any major concerns that could come from the assembly. Eight Albanian MPs from the ruling party entered the new parliament: (Xhemajl A. Limani from Prizren, Ramadan F. Ramadani from Podgur, Behlul A. Haliti from Gora, Shaqir Halili from Llap, Mustafa Dërguti from Podrimja, Mahmut Begu from Peja, Zeqir Zeqiri from Gjilan, and Sherif Beqir Voca from Vuçitërna).

This legislature, however, will be remembered for changing the course of Yugoslav politics from the traditional one, switching from France, to that of the Axis, towards Germany and Italy. This turnaround was made possible after Prince Pavle pushed Milan Stojadinović to overthrow the government at a meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Stojadinović’s government decided that the next elections would be held in December 1938. In the political arena, almost nothing changed. The government bloc was linked to the Serbian court, backed by Serbian politics, that of the opposition to Maček, who demanded a change in the constitution and federalism of the country, enjoying the support of other peoples, who, if united they could win the majority, and the third force was the “Zbor”.

In this political constellation, it is obvious that the Albanians tried to maneuver around the ruling party, that is, with Stojadinović, who was asked to prevent the displacement of Albanians to Turkey as a condition for supporting his party. Although without a political party, Ferhat Ali Draga still stood out, in the role of an already accepted Albanian authority country-wide, who already as chairman of the Skopje Waqf, appeared with two memoranda, which he sent to Stojadinović, who showed an “understanding”, though authorizing the case for consideration to Bosnian Mehmed Spaho, who was in his cabinet. Notably, Draga together with other local authorities and the Islamic clergy supported Stojadinović’s party, winning the majority of votes in Kosovo and other parts inhabited by Albanians. Thus, his list in Kosovo won 226,716 votes, while Maček’s list 74,977. On this occasion, 11 Albanians from Kosovo won MP mandates, all candidates of JRZ (Stojadinović’s party).¹⁷²¹

Although he won the election convincingly, albeit by manipulation, under the pressure of international events leading to the strengthening of fascism and the warnings of a new world crisis, that is, to prevent a greater influence on the domestic plane, the royal palace, that is, Belgrade’s Serbian policy, turned to an agreement with the Croats, who demanded internal federalism as a condition for continuing to maintain the common state. The king brought to power Dragiša Cvetković, who found Vladimir Maček as his partner among the Croats, with whom an agreement was reached on the federalism of the country, i.e. for the creation of the Croatian banovina (province) within the nine banovinas throughout the country. In these three settlements (Zeta, Morava, and Vardar, in accordance with the current organization of the

¹⁷²⁰ Čulinović, Ferdo: “*Jugoslavija između dva rata*“, Zagreb, 1961, p. 98.

¹⁷²¹ Idem.

regions, the Albanian territories of Kosovo and Macedonia were dispersed). Belgrade's move pleased the Croatian bloc, but did not weaken the position of the Serbs, as expected and hoped for by Albanians and other peoples oppressed by Serbian hegemony.

The Albanian factor, although deprived of its right to create its own party, after the annexation of Albania by Italy and the introduction of the Germans in Poland, so under the pressure of these events that had begun to change the European political scene, will be slightly released from the ongoing internal violence against it. Moreover, the official withdrawal of Turkey from the ratification of the convention with Belgrade for the displacement of Turks and Muslims (Kosovo Albanians) from Kosovo and other areas inhabited by Albanians, slowed the process and in some parts even stopped it altogether.

In these developments, Ferhat Ali Draga came to the fore again, when as the mayor of Waqf in Skopje tried to maintain the role of the main authority around whom all the political and social outlines of the Albanians circled.¹⁷²² Thus, under his guidance, the Albanian leaders tried to organize themselves as Albanian leadership, but would do so under the umbrella of the ruling party (JRZ), assessing that in the prevailing circumstances, around these issues, a cooperation with Belgrade would be more useful than any declarative post-Croatian federalism, which had its own accounts to settle. During a meeting between Ferhat Draga and Albanian leaders (Iliaz Agushi, Qerim Zena, Jusuf Imer, Sherif Voca, Adem Marmellaku, Jahja Daci, Sadik Kurti, and Asim Luzha) in the second half of 1939, the royal government bloc discussed accepting the legitimacy of the Albanian grouping within it.

The outbreak of World War Two, as well as developments in which the world was already divided into two blocs: that of the Axis Powers and its opponents (Great Britain, the United States and France), brought Belgrade closer to the axis. Yugoslavia, which since 1935 had entered into some secret talks about a possible trade with Italy over the eventual partition of Albania and a new division of spheres of interest in the Balkans, was already very close to a direct connection with these countries, since Stojadinović, initially and following him the Cvetković-Maček government saw its interests on the Axis. For Belgrade, even the annexation of Albania by Italy presented a chance, but also a threat to join the Axis. The chance was to reach an agreement with Italy for a further division of the Albanian space according to their interests, while the threat had to do with the fact that the non-acceptance of the pact with the Axis meant the creation of a Greater Albania.

It would certainly be a threat to force Belgrade to formally join the Tripartite Pact in early 1941, which the Cvetković-Maček government will sign in Berlin on March 3 of that year.

The Serbian and Croatian bourgeoisie, i.e. the right, will be forced to accept fascist pressure, while the left of the country, organized by the European right (primarily Great Britain), putting into operation the entire left spectrum led by the Yugoslav communists, who had been operating illegally for years (since the proclamation of "Obznana" in 1921), to overthrow the Tripartite Pact and thereby bring about another situation in the country that would

¹⁷²² Ferhat Ali Draga's activity in the political life of the country, especially after the elections of 1937, is related to that of the Vak'f of Skopje within the Islamic Religious Community, in which case he was elected head of the Islamic Community in Skopje, from whence, following the Islamic clergy, he entered into an agreement with the government of Stojadinovic. (See: Bajrami, Hakif: "Rrethanat shoqërore dhe politike në Kosovë më 1918-1941", Prishtinë, 1981; Osmani, Jusuf: "Kolonizimi, reforma agrare dhe shpërngulja e shqiptarëve nga Kosova 1918-1941", I, II, III, Prishtinë, 2016; Mitrović, Živan: "Srpske političke stranke", Beograd, 1939)

precede the destruction of the Versailles Yugoslavia, which would follow the German attack on April 6, 1941, when, after six days of bombing, Belgrade would capitulate.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR TWO

DESTRUCTION OF THE VERSAILLES' YUGOSLAVIA AND TEMPORARY ALBANIAN UNIFICATION

The destruction of Versailles' Yugoslavia brought new political realities to a space which, from the Eastern Crisis onwards and especially the Balkan and world wars, had been part of the interests of the great European powers on which the emerging states were based coming out of the centuries-old Ottoman occupation. The part that was mostly fragmented and serving as an exchange coin was that of the Albanian ethnicity. The destruction of Versailles' Yugoslavia turned the Albanian space into a focus of the Axis Powers as an important share, also because fascist Italy, part of Axis, as early as 1939, with the introduction of the Albanian (Zog) kingdom under the umbrella of the Italian Empire, in the new circumstances, could demand that the other Albanian parts held by Versailles' Yugoslavia (Kosovo and Western Macedonia), in the name of a Greater Albania, join the Italian Empire. Similarly, Bulgaria could claim, which also claimed as an ally, to expand its space towards Serbia, Kosovo, and especially Macedonia in the spirit of the Bulgarian state of San Stefano.

These and similar dilemmas gained even more weight knowing that the destruction of Versailles' Yugoslavia was rather a way of being punished for leaving the Tripartite Pact for the Axis, signing on March 27 with the Belgrade government, than part of a previous concept that had to be destroyed to create new realities in its space (from an independent Croatian state, Nedić's Serbia to "Greater Albania").

However, notably, Hitler had made a plan for the invasion and partition of Yugoslavia in March 1941. This plan was adhered to in the temporary directives for the division of Yugoslavia into three zones: German, Italian and Bulgarian. In addition to the formation of the free Croatian state, the territory of "old" Serbia was placed under German military administration. The implementation of this plan was announced on April 12, 1941 by the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command of the German Army, General Keitel.¹⁷²³

Although in principle the decision was made for a large part of the Albanian lands to join the "Greater Albania", which was to be led by Italy. However, dilemmas arose between Berlin and Rome over the issue of borders. This led to an urgent meeting in Vienna on April 21 and 22, 1941, between the German Foreign Minister, Von Ribbentrop, and the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano. Ciano had opposed the maximalist territorial claims of the Bulgarians towards Macedonia and Kosovo. The Italians represented the position that Bulgarians should be granted as little Albanian land as possible, as this was the only way to gain the trust of Albanians as important future partners in the region, while this concept harmed Greater Bulgaria. Since Bulgaria had joined the Pact, their demands had to be met with care. This

¹⁷²³ Čulinović, Ferdo: "*Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije*", Beograd, 1970, p. 523.

caused them to be given a part of the district of Gjilan, Vitia, a part of Zhupa of Siriniq and the district of Kaçanik. Later, in January 1942, the Bulgarian area expanded with Podujeva, and on January 17, 1943 with Mitrovica and Vuçitërnë.¹⁷²⁴

The rest was divided between Italy and Germany. Thus, the demarcation line between Germany and Italy was set in Vienna (from the direction of Vinci in Slovenia, through Leskovia of Plitvica and through Udbine and Donji-Lapac in Livno, Prejnj, Bjelasnica) - Priboj over Lim - Nova-Varoš - Sjenica - Novi-Pazar - Mitrovica - Prishtina. According to this division, the Dukagjin Plain and most of Kosovo belonged to the Italian Albanian protectorate. Three districts: Mitrovica, Vuçitërna, and Podujeva belonged to the German occupation area, namely Nedić's Serbia. The Germans, therefore, were interested in keeping the Kosovo ores as well as the railways connecting Belgrade with Thessaloniki, while the rest could be discussed with its allies.

For the part of Kosovo, the Dukagjin Plain and Macedonia, which became part of the Italian protectorate called "Greater Albania", in the summer of 1941 the "*Civil Commissariat for Kosovo, Dibra and Struga*" was formed. At its head was the High Commissioner, Fejzi Alizoti, who had the rank of Minister of the Government of Tirana. The administration was constituted according to that in Albania, respectively Italy. In December of that year, the government of these areas was taken over by the Ministry of Liberated Areas in Tirana, which was abolished in February 1943. In these parts, the prefectures of Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, and Dibra were formed, and later that of Tetova. The districts of Plava and Gucia, Rozhaja, and Tutin, Istog and Drenica also joined the prefecture of Peja. The Dukagjin Plain and the Kosovo part of the Italian occupation area included about 500,000 inhabitants. The Albanians of these areas, with the decision of the government of Tirana, on October 18, 1941, automatically became citizens of fascist Albania.

After the unification, Italy wanted Kosovo and other areas to appear as soon as possible in a fascist cloak. Thus, the "*Fascist Party of Albania*", formed on June 2, 1939 in Tirana, began to open its branches in Prishtina, Prizren, Peja and other Albanian cities. The Albanian Ministry of Education instructed schools, according to which they were tasked to "spread Albanian irredentism and education in the new spirit".¹⁷²⁵

Unlike the German and Bulgarian areas of occupation, there were many difficulties and disagreements by the Albanians against the circumstances in which they were placed, especially in the area occupied by the Bulgarians. In the Italian area, the dynamic economic life was encouraged: jobs were created, exploitation of ores continued, trade in consumer goods, cereals, etc. was revived. In order to benefit the beys, the Tirana government allowed for the renewal of feudal relations.

The headquarters of the High Commissioner and the Headquarters of the Italian Forces were established in Prizren. This city, in which numerous commercial, economic, administrative and cultural representations were located, experienced a dynamic degree of development becoming one of the most developed Albanian cities.

However, this was not the case in the three districts of Kosovo, which came under German occupation, which, together with Novi Pazar, constituted the prefecture of Kosovo based in Mitrovica, formally pertaining to Nedić's German Serbia, and included in *Banovina e Drina* based in Užica. The Albanian national group in Banovina of Drina had its confidant

¹⁷²⁴ Idem, p. 524.

¹⁷²⁵ Hadri, Ali: "*Kosovo i Metohija u Kraljevini Jugoslavije*", Istorijjski glasnik, Beograd, 1967, pp. 62-65.

in the rank of assistant, who participated in the decision-making on all issues related to Kosovo.¹⁷²⁶

Based on the decree of the “Council of Commissioners” issued by Milan Ačimović on August 6, 1941, the Prefecture of Kosovo, at the head of the districts (sub-prefectures) had deputy-prefects, members of the majority (Albanians), and their deputies were members of the minority from at least 25% ” (namely Serbs), while other officials came from the ranks of Albanians and Serbs in proportion to their ratio, number in districts (sub-prefectures). This also applied to the gendarmerie. The appointment was made by the “Serbian administrative power in Belgrade”, and the appointment of Albanian personnel was made in accord with the leader of the Albanian nationality group.¹⁷²⁷

In addition to the financial income, administered in accordance with the needs of the prefecture of Kosovo included in the German occupation area, Albanians were entitled to Albanian schools, but it was also mandatory to learn the Serbian language. Educational staff in Albanian schools were appointed by the Ministry of Education on the proposal of the leader of the Albanian nationality group.¹⁷²⁸

In the Kosovo County region, a German army regiment was stationed, consisting of the 717th Infantry Division, which also had its headquarters in Mitrovica. But in the Kosovo County, “*Albanian Gendarmerie*” was also formed, under the command of Colonel Pajazit Boletini, an officer of the former Yugoslav army, consisting of about a thousand members. There were also units of the “Serbian State Guard”, in which more than two-thirds were Albanians, and which for a time were under the command of Ali Bey Draga, the son of Ferhat Bey Draga, the leader of the “Albanian Nationality Group”. There were also Chetnik factions of Kosta Pecanac, consisting of units of “volunteers” scattered in the villages along with other formations.¹⁷²⁹

In order to fight for Kosovo and other areas occupied by the former Yugoslavia, now spread in three occupation zones, to join as much as possible a whole (on this occasion Greater Albania), in May 1941 the “*Kosovo Albanian National Defense*” Committee was transferred to Kosovo, headed by Bedri Pejani - chairman, Rexhep Mitrovica - vice chairman and Xhelal Mitrovica - secretary, which also included Ibrahim Gjakova, Tafil Boletini, Qerim Begolli, Shaqir Curri, Qemajl Prishtina, Rexhep Krasniqi, Tahir Zajmi, and others.¹⁷³⁰

A number of members of the Committee stopped in Prizren, while the rest, led by Bedri Pejani, went to Mitrovica, in order to act there so that this part of Kosovo would be included in “Greater Albania”. In Mitrovica, the Committee began publishing the newspaper “*Kosovari*”, which made constant calls for this part to join the common Albanian state under the Italian protectorate.

The topic of “Albanian unification”, however, divided the Committee in two. In pro-Italians (Ferhat Draga and Bedri Pejani, who were committed to this part of Kosovo being separated from Nedić’s “state” and joining Albania) and pro-German (Xhafer Deva, who favored an autonomy of Albanians under Germany by which the national aspirations of

¹⁷²⁶ Rajović, Radošin: “*Autonomia e Kosovës*”, Prishtinë, 1987, p. 198.

¹⁷²⁷ Idem, p. 200.

¹⁷²⁸ Miletić, Antun: “*Kosovo iz aspekta okupacione uprave Vermahta u Srbiji 1941-1944*”, Kosova - Kosovo, Prishtinë, no. 4/1975, pp. 163-168.

¹⁷²⁹ Hadri, Ali: “*Kosovo i Metohija u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji*”, Beograd, 1967, pp. 54-57.

¹⁷³⁰ The Committee “*Mbrojtja Kombëtare shqiptare e Kosovës*” (“*Albanian National Defense of Kosovo*”) resumed work in the summer of 1939 with the permission of the government of Shefqet Vërlaci. They were ready in “case of the Yugoslav crisis”, which, it was known, would soon lead to the overthrow of the violent state, to enter Kosovo and other Albanian areas to return them into the composition of Albania.

Albanians could be achieved step by step, which according to him required a strong supporter, such as Germany, which would see the unification of the Albanians also in its own interest of a strong regional ally).¹⁷³¹

To reconcile these differences, the “*Albanian National League*” was founded in Mitrovica headed by Ali Draga, who, as the leader of the “Albanian Group” represented the Albanians before the German occupying power. The secretary of the “League” was Vehbi Frashëri, the son of Mehdi Frashër, former chairman of the Albanian royal government and later chairman of the Council of the Regency of Albania (after the capitulation of Italy).

This will be the case, at least until the autumn of 1943, when fascist Italy capitulate and was replaced by German forces, which, once they entered Albanian territory, declared they were there as friends of the Albanians to provide protection and the continuity of the Albanian state.

NEW ALBANIAN REALITIES AND IDEOLOGICAL CONNECTION WITH YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS

The first contacts of the Yugoslav communists with the Albanian communist groups began in the second half of 1939 coming from two directions: Montenegro and Kosovo. Blažo Jovanović, originally from Montenegro and later Ivan Milutinović, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Tito’s confidant, was an appointee from Montenegro to work with the Albanian Communists. While from Kosovo there were Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša, settlers from Peja, both leaders of the communist organization of Kosovo, which at that time numbered about one hundred and fifty members, with only two Albanians in the leadership: Ramiz Sadiku and Ali Shukriu - recruited as Belgrade students,¹⁷³² with no backing of the party base from the ranks of Albanians. In those circumstances, Yugoslav communists for certain purposes speculated with Albanian membership in Kosovo, often falsifying lists and names they invented in Belgrade and elsewhere.¹⁷³³

Even without a party base in Kosovo, Yugoslav emissaries in Albania were soon able to establish “friendly and fraternal ties”, but always on a class basis, with representatives of Albanian communist and leftist groups to prepare them in advance to become subject to the Yugoslav rules of organization. Albania’s party base here should not have included Kosovo, as, according to the Yugoslavs, local party organization had already existed there since 1939, initially under the supervision of Provincial Committee of Boka and Montenegro, which at the Fourth Local Conference of the CLY in Zagreb became directly linked to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša appeared in Albania as party cadres from Kosovo. The first in the function of the organizational secretary of the Provincial Committee of the CLY for Kosovo and Metohija and at the same time a member of the Central Committee of the CLY. While the second as a member of the Provincial Committee.¹⁷³⁴

Evidently, therefore, even in the way it was organized, what appeared to be a party organization of Kosovo, mainly composed of Serbs and Malaysians and initially only with two Albanians and some party candidates, it was affiliated with the Central Committee of the

¹⁷³¹ Miletić, Antun: „*Kosovo iz aspekta okupacione uprave Vermahta u Srbiji*“, Prishtinë, 1975, pp. 163-198.

¹⁷³² Vukmanovic - Tempo, Svetozar: “*Memoari*” I, II, Beograd-Zagreb, 1985.

¹⁷³³ Idem.

¹⁷³⁴ Dedijer, Vladimir: “*Jugoslovenski-albanski odnosi 1939-1948*”, Beograd 1949, pp.18-21.

Communist Party of Yugoslavia and not with Serbia. This fact is important to show the unprincipled attitudes of the Yugoslav communists, but also of the Albanian ones from Albania, when at the end of the war, instead of the logic of this party organization following that of the political and institutional organization - with which Kosovo, at the very least, should have the status of a federal unit along with the rest – Serbia's tutelage would be forced, as it happened at the Assembly of the National Liberation Council in Prizren from 6-10 July 1945.¹⁷³⁵

However, without the slightest objection, the Albanian communists accepted the "instruction" of the Yugoslav communists to respect the separate party organization of Albanians in Albania and Kosovo, an organization that would then follow the same scheme in that of the Antifascist and the National Liberation Front, falling mainly into the hands of the Albanian communists, supervised by the Yugoslavs. As a result, in addition to giving up the party organization on the basis of state realities, this did not allow for the consolidation of the Albanian anti-fascist front in a democratic national liberation movement with a wide spectrum of membership, where there would be room for other national forces interested to be involved in the anti-fascist movement.

This was also expected. Because under the directives of Miladin and Dušan, who directly influenced organizing the establishment of the Communist Party of Albania, in November 1941 in Tirana, whereas in addition to the agenda, program and statute, with an opening speech held by an Albanian from Kosovo brought especially for keeping the minutes and something more,¹⁷³⁶ they made that the whole direction of the development of the communist movement in Albania be "watchful" of any national platform that could be labeled to the Antifascist Front and the National Liberation Movement. Yugoslav instructors among the ranks of the Albanian communists in time turned into commanders, paying close attention to whether the Albanian communists would be influenced by national ideas, so that they be prevented at the outset. Thus, it happened that even the left-wing intellectuals, who approached the movement out of conviction that this could create the conditions for the preservation of national unity, will be eliminated, either through internal conjured up intrigues, or eliminating them by methods of "indirect" denunciation to the Albanian police bodies "on staged accusation" as communist activists, which was very dangerous.¹⁷³⁷

There are many known cases of elimination of well-known intellectuals from the ranks of the anti-fascist movement through similar denunciations, as will happen with the liquidation of Emin Duraku, on November 28, 1942. Emin Duraku was one of the intellectuals from Kosovo, among the most distinguished and politically prepared for challenging the behind-the-scenes stages of the Slavs, who will be denounced by the Serbian communists to the Albanian gendarmerie as "Yugoslav communist agent".¹⁷³⁸ This happened after the Vitimirica Conference, which for the first time was attended by Albanian communists from Kosovo, who under the directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

¹⁷³⁵ See Rajeviq, Radoshin: "*Autonomia e Kosovës*", Prishtinë 1987, pp. 347-351.

¹⁷³⁶ It is about Elhami Nimani, a communist activist from Prizren. Elhami Nimani, brother of Xhavit Nimani, who was a member of the Korça communist group. X. Nimani, from 1941, with the order of the Albanian Communist Party, together with some others, returns to Kosovo, to help the massification of the National Liberation War among Albanians under the supervision of the Yugoslav communists. X. Nimani was also a participant in the Bujanovac Conference and a signatory to its Resolution. In more detail see Mugosha, Dushan: "*Shënime nga puna në Shqipëri*" ("Notes from work in Albania") 1941-1945.

¹⁷³⁷ More about Yugoslav directives to prevent the infiltration of "Trotskyists" and nationalists into the ranks of Albanian communists see Dedijer, Vladimir: "*Jugoslovenski-albanski odnosi 1939-1948*", Beograd 1949, pp. 32-33; Dizdarević, R: "*Albanski dnevnik*".

¹⁷³⁸ Emin Duraku's family in Gjakova possesses written information issued by the gendarmerie investigation in Prizren that Emin was surrounded due to a denunciation that had come to the police from an informant that near Lipjan there were several Serb agents, who were preparing a war action against the Albanian gendarmerie. As the gendarmerie surrounded the place and called for surrender, shots were fired at them from the opposite side. Not a Serb was found injured there, as reported, but rather Emin Duraku, unarmed at all, was taken to the hospital in Prizren where he died. It will be found out later that those following Emin Duraku had escaped in suspicious circumstances, and one of them was M. Milkovic, a senior party official from Kosovo.

Albania had to be incorporated into the party structure of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Kosovo and Metohija.

At the Vitimirica Conference, Emin Duraku came up with the well-known thesis that the Anti-Fascist War in Kosovo must be conducted in accordance with the interests of the Albanian people of Kosovo and the just solution of the national question.¹⁷³⁹

E. Duraku's stance sparked controversy between Albanian and Serbian communists, who reflected opposing views on the Kosovo issue, with Albanians emphasizing that its future must be determined in accordance with the will of the people. Tito's special envoy for Kosovo and Macedonia alerted the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia on "suspicious irredentist currents among Albanian communists" who, "influenced by the great Albanian ideas from Albania", aimed to "infiltrate" this spirit among the communist leadership in Kosovo as well, of which care must be taken to fight it in time."¹⁷⁴⁰

The other issue, the involvement of Kosovo in the Anti-Fascist Movement within the organizational structure of the Yugoslav National Liberation War, led by the Yugoslav Communists, directly affected the development of the Anti-Fascist Movement in Kosovo and its general direction into taking an ideological direction, undressing little by little, but with perfidiousness from any segment that could later be used as an alibi for Kosovo's right to declare itself in accordance with the will of its people, as guaranteed by its participation in the anti-fascist war in accordance with the Atlantic Charter.

Here, too, the Yugoslav communists, aided by the Albanian communists, played their perfidious games, which came to light on the eve of the end of the war and especially after it, when Kosovo again and violently remained under Yugoslav occupation, under the tutelage of "democratic" Serbia as its "oblast" (province), after having gone through the regime of imposing martial law and bloodshed of patriotic resistance against the communist occupation of Kosovo, bursting in all parts of Kosovo from the autumn of 1944 to continue with a general uprising during the spring and summer of 1945 with a tragic epilogue in Drenica, which would be considered an "Albanian counter-revolution".

The Yugoslav backstage against Kosovo began in two directions: that of the party organization, and that of the organization of the Communist-led Anti-Fascist National Liberation Front, from which little by little all patriotic and nationalist forces were excluded so that one day on these grounds accounts would be settled with the Albanian right.

The party organization, in fact, had not been able to free itself from the clutches of ideological and class concepts in the circumstances in which the Yugoslav framework was set for. But, since these were accepted and, the Communist Party of Albania appeared even in the role of agitprop of spreading the communist spirit in Kosovo and taking over its massification with the well-known internationalist slogans "*of resolving all disputed issues and problems inherited from the past, in accordance with the right of peoples to self-determination, to be discussed and decided on after the war is won*", it was expected that leftist intellectuals from Kosovo would be involved in this activity. Thus, Fadil Hoxha, Hajdar Dushi, Emin Duraku, Sabrije Vokshi (Bija), Xhevdet Doda, Xhavid Nimani, Xheladin Hana, Ismet Shaqiri, Hysni Zajmi, Meriman Braha, Elhami Nimani, Xhevdet Hamza, Mazllom Këpuska, Hajdar Dushi, and other Kosovars who attended school in Albania and there had met with communist groups

¹⁷³⁹ In the author's conversation with Fadil Hoxha, in October 1994 in Prishtina, he acknowledged the often camouflaged fact that Emin Duraku at the Vitimirica meeting, near Peja, had come up with a clear platform for protecting the rights of the Kosovo Albanian people after the war, which had to be in line with its interests, so that it would be respected. There will also be a confrontation between the position of the Albanian representatives and those of the Serbs and Montenegrins, who emphasized that it was too early to open such issues, which had to be resolved after the victory over fascism and in accordance with internationalist positions. Emin Duraku will emphasize that the Albanian masses could not benefit in the war only through dry slogans and without clear and strong guarantees that in that war they would win their rights. Fadil Hoxha claimed that the murder of Emin Duraku was an organized conspiracy to eliminate him, but without wishing to name the culprits.

¹⁷⁴⁰ See: Letter of Central Committee of Communist Party of Yugoslavia addressed to the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Kosovo and Metohija. Cited by Spasoje Djaković: "*Sukobi na Kosovu*", Beograd, 1984, pp. 382-386.

in Korça or Shkodra, had to return to Kosovo “with party duties”. In Kosovo, they had to be incorporated into the party base dominated by Serbs and Montenegrins and the barely investigated National Liberation Front. But even in those extremely difficult circumstances, they managed to create small partisan units. Initially that of “Zejnel Hajdini”, while later the “Emin Duraku” unit, “Sharri Unit”, that of Shala and later “Bajram Curri” battalion, which operated in the area of Dukagjin and Tropoja.¹⁷⁴¹

These partisan units, although small and with a very narrow range of action, nevertheless mattered, as they also reflect that part of the Albanian determination to fight fascism as an ideology, but not the new realities it had brought about for the Albanians.

This is where the knot of the Albanian dilemma begins, which has to do with the attitude towards fascism in general, that, on the one hand, accepting the merits and the fruits (national unification, although not complete, but also as such, was enough to turn it back as an issue that needed to be answered), while on the other hand, fighting it as an invader and also as an ideology. This dilemma, as time went on and it gained weight, became increasingly clear that fascism, as the United States entered the war against it including the Soviet Union and other world powers in the allied anti-fascist alliance, would not last long. Now the question of what would happen after the departure of fascism opened, when it was rather clear that the occupiers would return, albeit in a new guise, such as that of brotherhood and unity, which promised equality and solutions to the problems of the past with ideological recipes, which could not be trusted at all. The Serbs, even on the occasion of the first penetration in the Albanian space in 1877/8, even on the eve of the Balkan wars, had promised the Albanians “that after the liberation from the Ottomans” there will be peace and equality and common life, but they always did the opposite. Memories of the recent wars were still fresh, as were the pools of blood and the tragedy that had taken place over the past three decades.

Since the realities were such that fascism was not being opposed by the people of Kosovo, while the arrival of the Germans and their behavior would remove even the few doubts left by the Italians with the collapse of the Kingdom of Albania and the unification of Albania with the Savoy Kingdom under Victor Emmanuel III, the dishonest Yugoslavs who led the Albanian communists in Albania, showed patience in Kosovo, not exposing themselves, waiting for the weakening of the German power in the East, which inevitably reflected their situation in the Balkans with many of their units retreating northward, to create a new European defense front at Elba, against the infiltration of the Soviet Red Army and at Normandy, against the announced Anglo-American landing.

After the capitulation of Italy, in the autumn of 1943, the Yugoslav communists began to show more and more interest in the development of anti-fascist war in Kosovo with the commitment to keep it connected to themselves. Although without any contact “with the party base”, which they kept in their notebooks as established since 1939, (except for some emissary who entered concealed on his way to Albania), the Yugoslav envoys to Enver, Miladin and Mugoša, sought cooperation between the partisan ranks of Kosovo and those of Albania. They even demanded this on behalf of the Kosovar partisans, with whom they also had no physical connection. However, they retained the “right” to speak on their behalf thanks to the stance of the Yugoslav communists, with which the Albanian communists would agree, so that the party organization and that of the anti-fascist front in Kosovo remained “under the competence” of the Yugoslav communists.

During the four years of this parallelism in Kosovo, Tito’s special envoy for Kosovo and Macedonia, Svetozar Vukmanović -Tempo, only once, from the beginning of 1943, disguised, in two days, on the way to Tirana, must have stayed in Kosovo (sheltered in Prizren with the Nimani family).¹⁷⁴² Disguised and masked with Albanian names were also those five or six

¹⁷⁴¹More about the formation of partisan detachments in Kosovo see Dr. Ali Hadri: “*Lëvizja Nacionalçlirimtare në Kosovë*”, Prishtinë, 1971; Fadil Hoxha: “*Kur pranvera vonohet*”, Prishtinë; “*Një jetë në shërbim të atdheut*”, Prishtinë, 2007, Spasoje Djaković: “*Sukobi na Kosovu*”, 1984.

¹⁷⁴² See: Svetozar Vukmanović – Tempo: “*Memoari*”, I, II, 1985.

Serbs who had participated in the partisan units of Kosovo, among them Pavle Jovičić (Paloka), Milan Mičković (Shefqet), Dragutin Djordjević (Daut), Milan Zečar (Zeça) and some other, a disguise that will be fatal for Albanians. Because, after the end of the war, after putting Kosovo under military administration, on February 8, 1945, they were the main arbitrators determining the few Albanian “friends” from the ranks of the National Liberation (but always suspected) and the many “Albanian enemies”, being Ballists to them, were the intellectuals, patriots and all those who had defended the idea of the Albanian union, with whom the accounts will be settled in a most brutal and bloodiest way under the condemnation of “enemies of the people” and “collaborators of the fascist occupier”.

Prior to this bloodbath, which was ignored or hidden by Albanian and Yugoslav ideological historiography, Albanian communists from Kosovo educated in Albania and other intellectuals involved in the National Liberation Movement, as sent by the Communist Party of Albania, or committed on their own initiative to assisting the cause of national unification, and in time had managed to obtain some leading positions in the ranks of the commanding structure of the war but also through the National Liberation Councils, which presented the nuclei of local government, acted towards an independence of the organizational structure of the war and the “people’s authority”, regardless of the fact that these structures were almost unnoticed and, in relation to the structures of local government and administration exercised throughout the country by state authorities, which enjoyed support of all Albanians, remained outside any influence on daily life.

ALBANIAN DIVISIONS OVER IDEOLOGICAL AFFILIATIONS AND THE YUGOSLAV DICTATORSHIP

The opening of a range of political rivalries in Albania with the participation of the Albanian right, created opportunities for the anti-fascist front to expand the spectrum on a broad democratic basis. This provided Albania with an opportunity for its future not to be determined on ideological aspects, but rather on democratic ones.

The presence of the British mission in Albania¹⁷⁴³ and other missionaries from the allied powers from the beginning of 1943 until the end of the war should have served this purpose.

Evidently, this presence did not pass without difficulty and it clearly did not manage to fulfill its primary goal, i.e. the creation of circumstances to prevent the victory of the left in Albania, as a precondition for the Albanian political factor to connect around a common pro-Western national platform. This failure was due to the involvement of the Yugoslav political and military factor, all the while, to bring the Albanian Antifascist Front under the umbrella of the Albanian communists led by the Yugoslav communists.

Regardless of this outcome, which influenced Albania and Albanians to remain in the eastern world, i.e. hostage to communism, Great Britain was the first country from among the Great Powers, which showed an interest in developments in Albania from the fascist occupation till the end of the war. British diplomacy and military services were linked to some of the Albanian nationalists (Abaz Kupi, the Kryeziu brothers from Gjakova, Mustafa Gjinishi and others). They were required to be included in the anti-fascist front, despite the specific circumstances in which the Albanian world went, especially after the unification of the Albanian lands made by Italy and Germany from 1941 onwards. Two years later, in 1943, the United Kingdom sent to Albania the first military mission led by Major Bill McLean, who entered from Greece. The British mission was welcomed after the General Staff of the

¹⁷⁴³ On the British mission in Albania see: Hibert: “*Fitorja e hidhur*” (“*Bitter Victory*”), Tiranë, 1993; Tilman, William, Amerym Julian and Kemp, Peter: “*Kujtime që nuk shlyhen*”, Tiranë, 1984, and Smiley: “*Albanian Assignment*”, 1984; General Davies: “*Aventura ilire*”, Tiranë.

Albanian National Liberation Army (ANLA) and was given the opportunity to liaise with various anti-fascist forces.¹⁷⁴⁴

The successful accommodation of Major McLean among Albanians, as well as the wide range of information he provided, prompted the British to embark on a high-level mission to Albania, led by Brigadier General Edmond Davis, along with a large staff with Colonel A. Nikas, as Chief of Staff. "Davis" mission from DSO (Directorate of Special Operations) laid the foundations of other missions, such as that composed by Major Richard Reidell and Captain Anthony Simcox deployed in the Dibra area.¹⁷⁴⁵

As soon as he arrived, General Davis met with E. Hoxha, from whom he demanded that the attacks against the "National Front" be stopped, despite the reservations that the British had towards the "reserved" course of the Albanian nationalists towards the Germans.¹⁷⁴⁶

In November 1943, General Davis met with the leaders of the "Balli Kombëtar", with which an agreement was reached that they would attack the German forces, but as agreed, Mid'hat Frashëri fully engaged the Ballists in the operations. He conditioned the war against the Germans with the cessation of hostilities of the Albanian partisans against the Balli forces, which, according to Frashëri, were carried out under the direction of the Yugoslavs in order to fail any cooperation between the nationalist forces and the left, so that the Anti-Fascist War in Albania would be entirely left to the partisans, who maintained the course of Belgrade.¹⁷⁴⁷

Following these talks and observations in the country, General Davis sent the first report to London, in which case he suggested the support of all political forces in Albania, regardless of their ideological orientation, without interfering in the ongoing civil war.¹⁷⁴⁸

This step was made possible in December 1942, when the foreign ministers of the three Allied Powers (USA - Hull, Great Britain - Eden and the Soviet Union - Molotov) announced the position of their governments on the developments in Albania, whereas in a joint statement the three ministers appreciated the assistance that the Albanian people had provided to the war against the Italian fascist occupier reaffirming the national independence that Albania enjoyed before being occupied by the Italian fascists in 1939.¹⁷⁴⁹

In another subsequent report, General Davis, after announcing that the situation in the country had changed, called for the denunciation of the "National Front" and the Zogists, since, according to him, they openly cooperated with the Germans.¹⁷⁵⁰

Davis's suggestions were also ignored by the Foreign Office, as General McLean, who had good relations with Balli and Kupi, said that the National Liberation Front should not be left entirely in the hands of the Albanian partisans, led by the Yugoslavs, because it was ruining the balance of British interests in this part. For more, at General McLean's suggestions, the British strengthened contacts with the Albanian nationalists in the north, sending Smiley, McLean, and others on a special mission, who did their best not to involve the Albanian nationalists (Balli Kombëtar) in the war on the side of the Germans, a mission that is known to have failed.¹⁷⁵¹

In the spring of 1944, the British military missions were joined by the American military mission, led by Captain Thomas Stefani, and the Soviet mission, led by Major Ivanov.¹⁷⁵²

Although clearly the missionaries of the Great Powers in Albania had tasks defined by their headquarters, with those of a geostrategic nature in the foreground, to which in Albania geopolitics determined their outcome, remaining in the eastern (soviet) sphere, it may be said that the Albanian right, on the Anglo-American advice, was forced at the national level to

¹⁷⁴⁴ See "Historia e popullit shqiptar", Vol. IV, Tiranë, 2008, p. 106; Smiley: "Albanian Assignment", 1984, pp. 49, 118.

¹⁷⁴⁵ General Davies: "Aventura ilire", Tiranë, p. 57; 108; Smiley: "Albanian Assignment", 1984, pp. 49, 118.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Idem, pp. 58-59.

¹⁷⁴⁷ See: Këlcyra, Ali: "Shkrime për historinë e Shqipërisë", Tiranë, 2008, p. 192.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Smiley: "Albanian Assignment", 1984, p. 118.

¹⁷⁴⁹ "Historia e popullit shqiptar", Vol. IV, Tiranë, 2008, p. 61.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Idem, p. 108.

¹⁷⁵¹ See: Smiley: "Albanian Assignment", 1984; Hiber: "Fitorja e hidhur", Tiranë, 1993.

¹⁷⁵² "Historia e popullit shqiptar", Vol. IV, Tiranë, 2008, p. 109.

enter into negotiations with the communists and create an anti-fascist democratic front in Albania, where there would be room for all. The Communists, who had previously signaled being in favor of a common war, but with the intention of leading it, as will actually happen, accepted this challenge for fear that they might be marginalized and simply condemned as pro-soviet, which would greatly harm them.

Thus, after several mutual meetings between the various political forces, with nationalists appearing more willing to a general agreement, where the National Front had already begun to create the framework in accordance with the principles of the “Decalogue”, the first meeting of representatives of both sides met in Tapiza near Tirana on July 26, 1943, in a preparatory meeting for the General Conference.

On the same day in Shkodra, Balli organized large demonstrations against the Italian occupiers, which were attended by the city’s youth and many well-known intellectuals. In these demonstrations, the professor of the gymnasium Mustafë Dërvishi, Balli’s youth secretary, was killed. They were caused by the fall of Mussolini, which gave Albania a good sign that the Italian occupier was before its downfall.¹⁷⁵³

In the atmosphere of this demonstration and the weakening of Italian fascism, the preparatory meeting had to turn into a demonstration of the Albanian union in order to face the challenges that were on the verge and were important for the future of the country. This made the participation of the delegations at the highest level, such as that of the Delegation of the General National Liberation Council composed of Major Abaz Kupi, Myslim Peza, Ymer Dishnica, and Mustafa Gjinishi of the organization “Balli Kombëtar” composing of Mit’hat Frashëri, Hasan Dosti, and Faik Quku, on which occasion M. Frashëri was elected chairman of the meeting and Mustafa Gjinishi its secretary.¹⁷⁵⁴

At the Tapiza meeting, two main issues were discussed: how to better organize and in a broader style the armed struggle against the occupier and the problem of ethnic Albania, especially that of Kosovo, for which a conclusion was reached that a settlement would be sought in accordance with the Atlantic Charter.¹⁷⁵⁵

The minutes of the Tapiza meeting were signed by Ymer Dishnica, Abaz Kupi, Mustafa Gjinishi, and Myslim Peza, enjoying the full mandate of the General National Liberation Council. The meeting also demanded that in the next final meeting, the independence of Albania be announced, where it was also about the formation of a provisional government in Kruja.¹⁷⁵⁶

While the second meeting, where the agreement was reached, was held on August 1-2 in Mukje of Kruja. The General Council of the National Liberation Front was attended by Ymer Dishnica, Mustafa Gjinishi, and Abaz Kupi, who signed the joint agreement, according to which the proposal of the “Balli Kombëtar” (“National Front”) for the establishment of the “Committee for the Salvation of Albania” was accepted. This committee would consist of 6 representatives of the “Balli Kombëtar” Organization and 6 representatives of the National Liberation Front. This committee would fall with the formation of a provisional government. The Provisional Committee, among other tasks, included that of the declaration of independence.

¹⁷⁵³ Butka, Uran: “Mukja – shans i bashkimit, peng i tradhtisë”, Tiranë, 2007, p. 39.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Idem.

¹⁷⁵⁵ “Atlantic Charter”, the most important international document signed on August 14, 1941 by Roosevelt and Churchill, heralded the beginning of a new era in relations between nations and nationalities, enabled *self-determination*, and marked an important step in expanding the alliance against fascism. This charter had international support for the just solution of the Albanian national question as well as the Albanian participation in the anti-fascist coalition.

¹⁷⁵⁶ The proposal for the formation of a provisional government in Kruja came from Major Abaz Kupi and was supported by M. Frashëri and others, but was removed from the agenda at the insistence of Mustafa Gjinishi, who said that this would not be accepted by the National Liberation, because Kruja was associated with A. Kupi, as his birthplace. This pushed Y. Dishnica that, if this decision was taken, which he would support, to propose Vlora, which was related to the act of national independence of 1912. As it is known, this point was removed from the agenda of the meeting of Mukje at the insistence of the communists, who had to first obtain the consent of the Yugoslavs, who were in principle opposed to any stance of this nature before victory was achieved against the Nazi-fascists. (See: Butka, Uran: “Mukja...”, p. 43).

The agreement also provided that the joint war was aimed at the ethnic protection of the Albanian state. This issue was sanctioned by Item 2 of the Mukje agreement, which, as expected, was “the hottest” and most talked about then, with the “swords” being broken on both sides, because it was about the Albanian unification on ethnic bases, where Kosovo and other parts of Albania were included, and also those parts that had been left to the Bulgarians and Mitrovica and the surrounding area held by the Germans. It also stressed the importance of Ulqin, Tivar, and other parts that should have belonged to Albania.¹⁷⁵⁷

Against this major issue, the “Ballists” seemed to be clearer, more determined and resolute, with a platform demanding a *fight for the ethnic Albanian state*, while the Communists were preoccupied with the *Albanian state*, without the words *fight* and *ethnic*. Gjinishi demanded that the Kosovo issue not burden the agreement, as the focus had to be on internationally recognized borders and similar justifications. He even declared that “an important agreement was one that protects Albania and not harm it”, alluding to the “creatures of fascism” with which the communists should not agree.¹⁷⁵⁸

Balli’s representatives, led by Mid’had Frashëri, estimated that neither fascism nor the rest had made the Albanian union, but the right of the Albanian people to live united, which had been trampled on in London and Paris. They defended the view that “*if the fascists have done something good and in the interest of the Albanians, no one has the right to give up this good, but rather try to actually turn it into a fait d’accompli.*”¹⁷⁵⁹

So, M. Frashëri saw the solution of the Kosovo issue inseparable from that of the war for national liberation, “because any form of liberation that has not been crowned with union with the motherland, means undoubtedly a second yoke.”¹⁷⁶⁰

Arguing with some of the representatives of the National Liberation (Gogo Nushi and Myslim Peza, as the first had stated, “what we need Kosovo for, we have the plight of Albania” and the latter for saying that “Kosovo has been granted by fascism!” and “we do not accept gifts from fascism”), M. Frashëri had replied that when Albanian nationalists talk about Kosovo and other areas separated from the Serbian and Greek occupiers, they think about ethnic Albania, as an ethnic and historical right that belongs to Albanians, and that no one has the right to give it up, much less seeing its just solution as a foreign affairs or “foreign gift” issue because it is a matter of Albanians, which has to do with our being and our right to live free and united like other peoples.¹⁷⁶¹

After numerous talks and compromises, as well as the readiness of Ymer Dishnica, who led the delegation of the National Liberation Front, to give this issue a historical answer regardless of what the communists thought from Belgrade to Moscow, will accept the formulation stating:

*“We will fight for an independent Albania and for the implementation of the universally recognized principle guaranteed by the Atlantic Charter on determination of peoples for an ethnic Albania.”*¹⁷⁶²

Article 2 of this agreement demanded respecting and recognizing the pan-Albanian will for an ethnic, independent and democratic Albania. Through the practical application of this principle, the Albanian issue could be resolved fairly, as well as the injustice that had been done to it over the centuries would end.¹⁷⁶³

In addition to Article 2, i.e. the one using the wording , “we will fight for an independent Albania...”, gave an answer to the issue of unification of Kosovo and Albania, Article 3 of the

¹⁷⁵⁷ Idem.

¹⁷⁵⁸ For more on Mukje and what was to follow see Uran Butka’s book: “*Mukja – shans i bashkimit, peng i tradhtisë*”, Tiranë, 1998.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Idem, p. 54.

¹⁷⁶⁰ See at AQSH, p. 14 – Tract by Balli Kombëtar, June 1943.

¹⁷⁶¹ Butka, Uran: “Mukja...”, p. 56.

¹⁷⁶² Idem, p. 61.

¹⁷⁶³ Idem, p. 61.

Agreement too, which sanctioned “the form of the regime to be determined by the people themselves after the end of the war through a Constitutional Assembly, elected by direct general vote”, was followed by many discussions, because, as such, it was in the Decalogue of the “National Front”. But it was approved and on that occasion it laid the foundations of party political pluralism with free elections, freedom of thought, belief, press and speech, respect for free private initiative and property, providing for human and national rights.¹⁷⁶⁴

On the third day of the work of the Assembly, the Provisional Salvation Committee of Albania convened, which decided to issue a proclamation stating that the fight against the occupiers would take place under the motto “Death, or Freedom!”.

The proclamation addressed to the Albanian people, among other things, stated:

“It’s been almost five years since fascist Italy invaded our dear country sowing darkness and misery everywhere. Barbarism has reached its peak. In recent times, the enemy has pursued and destroyed villages and cities and with a furious thirst has killed and slaughtered men and women ... But despite the great suffering and torture, the enemy could not extinguish in our heroic people the flame of Albanianism ...

The Albanian people, who have always known how to unite as closely as possible in case of danger to their country, this time did not fail to find the right path, forming a steel block and appear today under the name “Committee for the Salvation of Albania” for cooperation of all organized powers of the nation, according to the full agreement between the “Balli Kombëtar ” organization and the General National Liberation Council.

The Committee for the Salvation of Albania, a living expression of the powers of the Nation, presents this program:

1. *Joint and immediate war alongside the great Allies of England, the United States, and the Soviet Union, as well as the oppressed peoples against the barbaric invaders.*

2. *Fight for an Independent Albania, fight for the implementation of the universally recognized principle guaranteed by the Atlantic Charter of People’s Self-Determination, for an ethnic Albania.*

3. *Fight for a free, democratic and people’s Albania.*

“The Committee for the Salvation of Albania” will continue to fight to lead the Albanian people on the path of sacrifice and honor until the formation of the provisional government.

The form of the regime will be determined by the people themselves by means of a Constituent Assembly directly elected by universal suffrage.”¹⁷⁶⁵

The “Provisional Committee for the Salvation of Albania” took responsibility for the Mukje Agreement and decided to congratulate itself as the steering committee of the joint war with a battle against the Italian invaders the day after its achievement. The Command was assigned to Abaz Kupa, until the joint headquarters was established.¹⁷⁶⁶

The statement of the “Provisional Committee for the Salvation of Albania” and the agreement on major issues for the future of Albanians and Albania to live free and united in a democratic state, as will be seen, will turn into an apple of discord. Because the Communists, under the influence of the Yugoslavs, will quickly abandon the Mukje agreement. This opened the door not only to the disintegration of the anti-fascist front but also to a fratricidal war, erupting in Albania and consequently keeping Albania in the communist bloc.¹⁷⁶⁷

Indeed, the breakdown of the Mukje agreement by the Albanian communists, viewed from its dire consequences, can be considered a major act of national treason against Albania and the Albanian cause in general, because on its part the Yugoslavs managed to prevent three major Albanian objectives, which could be achieved during that time and under those crucial circumstances:

a) Albanian unification in accordance with the Atlantic Charter, as an inalienable right;

¹⁷⁶⁴ Idem.

¹⁷⁶⁵ See: AQSH, p. 270, 1943, dossier 11.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Idem.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Idem, pp. 54/55.

- b) The unification of nationalist forces within a common democratic spectrum as the main force of the Albanian anti-fascist front and
- c) Creating the conditions for Albania to be part of the free and democratic western world.

By thwarting these major objectives for the Albanian world, by destroying Mukje in relation to Albania, the Yugoslavs also achieved three strategic goals, which were in line with Belgrade's anti-Albanian interests pursued since the Eastern Crisis:

- a) Keeping Kosovo, Macedonia and other Albanian territories in Montenegro occupied during the Balkan wars and reoccupied after the First World War on the borders of communist Yugoslavia with the great help of Albanian politics;
- b) The bringing communists to power in Albania, as vassals of Tito and his policy and
- c) The introduction of communist Albania in the eastern sphere.

If the first issue, dealing with national unification, the Yugoslav communists, led by Tito, would show to be a little more restrained, not denying the issue, but rather leaving it for later after the war against fascism was won, demagoguery used very cunningly throughout the war, on the issue of the nationalist spectrum in the conduct of the war and the claim that the Antifascist Front was led by the Communists, since they had won this right through an active war against the fascists, will be direct and uncompromising.

This will be clear in an immediate reaction by M. Popović, who, as soon as the decisions were in his hand, he had torn the paper throwing them on Enver's face infuriated.¹⁷⁶⁸

Thus, the great Yugoslav concern over Mukje's decisions, which they did not expect to be of that nature, where Albanian national interests would find common ground, was also supported by the representatives of the National Liberation who thought they had full influence, at the insistence of the Yugoslav emissaries, a meeting with the main leaders of the SNP and the National Liberation Army was hastily called in Vithkuq. At this meeting, at the insistence of Mugoša and Popović, Hoxha was ordered to break the agreement, while its signatories (Ymer Dishnica and Mustafa Gjinishi), although not present, were tried, with Mugoša rejecting the Mukje Agreement and seeking capital punishment for Y. Dishnica and M. Gjinishi. Demanding an open and uncompromising war against Albanian nationalism, M. Popović went a step further, exactly where it should be,¹⁷⁶⁹ to the point that the British missionaries Hibert and Smiley call "the political strategy of the CPA, that the nationalists from the ranks of the National Liberation Movement, however, were to be incited to emerge as collaborators of Italy and Germany."¹⁷⁷⁰

In this regard, E. Hoxha was very obedient and expedient. On August 8, 1943, he issued a party circular announcing the basis for not accepting the treaty proclaimed by the Provisional Salvation Council of Albania in Mukje. His directive was clear:

"This treaty is contrary to the national liberation line and is *disapproved* by the Central Committee of the Party. Therefore, if you have not distributed them, shout and stop talking about it."¹⁷⁷¹

That this was a directive of the Yugoslavs given to the Albanian communists led by E. Hoxha, which they had accepted by apologizing, is confirmed by a letter that M. Popović sent to the Central Committee of the CP of Yugoslavia. Among other things, it said:

"We talked to the Central Committee of the CPA and studied the issue, the situation there and then we decided to issue a tract so that the way of organizing the *Committee for the Salvation of Albania* is not recognized, nor its functioning as the highest instance of the National Liberation."¹⁷⁷²

¹⁷⁶⁸ Butka, Uran: "Mukja...", Tiranë 2007, p. 93.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Idem, p. 94.

¹⁷⁷⁰ See: Hibbert: "Fitorja e hidhur", Tiranë, 1993; Smiley, D: "Me detyrë në Shqipëri", Tiranë 1993

¹⁷⁷¹ AQSH, p. 14, year 1943, file 11.

¹⁷⁷² See: Dedijer, V: "Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi 1939-1948", Beograd, 1949, pp. 92-93.

Similarly, Mugoša addresses his party base, announcing that “the Treaty of the Mukje Conference caused great turmoil. The Party Organization in Vlora, under my directive, wrote the treaty and addressed all the units of the “Balli Kombëtar” (National Front) putting it briefly and plainly: “Who does not want to be with us, is against us”.¹⁷⁷³

This was therefore an ultimatum by which the Albanian communists, by order of the Yugoslavs, setting unacceptable conditions, which were also against the position of the allies for a common anti-fascist war, had declared war on the Albanian nationalists.

Of course, this declaration of war was primarily valid for the “Balli Kombëtar”, which had the support of the people and had begun to consolidate its ranks with war units, although it still hesitated to enter into open war with the Germans. Therefore, it was more than clear why the wire was ringing at them, in line with the strategy of treating them as “suspicious” and even “collaborators of fascists”. This meant their exclusion from the Albanian Antifascist Front, for the creation of which the Allied Powers had been so interested.

This was also reflected in the criticism addressed to the leadership of the CPA being called opportunist towards “Balli Kombëtar” by Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party, a member of the General Staff of the NLA of Yugoslavia and a envoy of the Central Committee of the YCP in Albania, working also on the project of a Balkan confederation under the leadership of Yugoslavia. Even Tempo, on Tito’s directives, hurried to Kucakë of Korça, in August 1943, to convene the meeting of the Central Committee of the CPA. There he will seek condemnation of the Mukje agreements and a review of co-operation with “Balli”.¹⁷⁷⁴

On this occasion too, as Miladin and Dušan did days before, E. Hoxha apologized, blaming Dishnica and Gjinishi, whom Mugoša had already “tried”.

“Y. Dishnica violated the Central Committee’s orders and did not defend the Party line. He capitulated before the pressure of the reactionary bourgeoisie, committing an act of treason here.”¹⁷⁷⁵

Thus, Enver, before Tempo, openly denounced the Mukje agreement and promised that such “treason” mistakes would no longer be made.¹⁷⁷⁶

Y. Dishnica, denying Hoxha’s allegations that “he did not follow the party’s instructions”, says that he “carried out the duty and instructions of the General National Liberation Council”, at the same time responding to some subsequent interpretations that Hoxha made to these events, presenting “something softer” and ostensibly “strategic” issues and not as dictates of the Yugoslavs, to which he and the Albanian communists had voluntarily submitted, going a step further.¹⁷⁷⁷

As Enver Hoxha’s revision of the event will show later, some attitudes about Mukja and relations with the “National Front”, were, at least from Mukja and onwards, determined by the Yugoslavs as confirmed by what was taken as a “counter-response” by Albanian communists to Mukja, always under the dictates of the Yugoslavs, as proven at the “Second National Liberation Conference” held in Labinot on September 4-8, 1943, in which case the Yugoslavs built the structures and determined the political line of the CPA.

At this Conference, in addition to the party’s denunciation of the Mukje agreement and its declaration of invalidity, on the grounds that “it is contrary to the interests of the CPA and the war”, it was decided to declare war on the “National Front”, with which for some time there had been solid cooperation. So, the decision of the Labinot Conference that the power of the National Liberation Council was the only authority, paved the way for a one-party system and a totalitarian government in Albania.¹⁷⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷³ See: Mugoša, Dushan: “*Shënime nga Shqipëria 1941-1944*”.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Dedijer, V: “*Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi 1939-1948*”, Beograd, 1949, p. 93.

¹⁷⁷⁵ See report of E. Hoxha in the CP Archive for Tirana, 15 September 1943.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Idem.

¹⁷⁷⁷ See: Butka, Uran “Mukja...”, p. 100.

¹⁷⁷⁸ Idem.

Thus, the breakdown of the Mukje agreement not only punched a just stance, such as national unification, which had to be reconfirmed by the joint anti-fascist struggle of all Albanian political forces, but also opened the other side, the tragic one, civil war in Albania and among Albanians in general on the basis of ideological divisions. On this occasion, the Yugoslavs were able to achieve their goals towards Albanians and Albania. This civil war, as will be seen, will result in another Albanian tragedy, such as the one that began with the seizure of power by the communists, to which Kosovo paid the highest price, returning it under the occupation of Belgrade.

The failure of Mukje and what will appear as internal Albanian divisions that will go as far as fratricidal war - the third in a row, after what had happened in 1914-1915 and in 1924 - first with the coup-state Islamic-Protestant and then with the coup-state of June left against Zog's government - will be conditioned by two dominant factors, affecting further events, which will determine the direction of other Albanian divisions and developments leaving the Albanians within the eastern bloc.

The first factor has to do with the great influence of the Yugoslav communists on the Albanian left and the Albanian Communist Party as its political and ideological product, turning during and after the war into a Belgrade branch, supervised and also becoming a complete vassal, which, as is well known, was able to sacrifice everything to ideological militancy: from national interests, such as those related to the realities of World War Two that had to be defended; the issue of Kosovo (willingly leaving the Yugoslavs, participating in its deep tragedy with more than 50,000 victims), to the sacrifice of the state, as happened from 1945-1948 when the Yugoslav communists begging that Albania become the seventh republic of Yugoslavia!¹⁷⁷⁹

The second factor is related to the inability of the Albanian right and other scattered Albanian patriotic forces to manage to return to the anti-fascist front with an active war, to turn it into a democratic movement that would gain the full trust of Anglo-Americans. In its absence, the Communist-led National Liberation Front will win, replacing the liberation and national character of the movement with that of class warfare and communist ideology, which will enable it at the end of the war to restore communist dictatorship and aligning of Albania in the socialist bloc, with tragic consequences for the Albanians.

As for the first issue, i.e. the great role of the Yugoslav communists in the Communist Party of Albania and taking the reins of its leadership from the beginning to the end, this has to do with the great experience of the Yugoslav communists and the role played in the internationalist movement as well as in the high structures of the Comintern itself. They would be entrusted with the "hood" towards the Albanian communists, which will be best reflected in their role played during the preparatory time when they will send their cadres to Albania, Miladin Popović (Alia) and Dušan Mugoša (Sala), two Montenegrins from Kosova. The first as a direct representative of Tito, and the second as a representative of the so-called party base from Kosovo - a great-Serb wearing a communist mask, which, as will be seen, will make Enver Hoxha and other Albanian communists strip naked of any idea that Kosovo and other Albanian areas retain the right to unite with Albania. This was also done outside of the claims made by the Yugoslav communists at the 1928 Dresden Congress that the "Versailles Yugoslavia was a prison of peoples that had to be demolished" and on this occasion Albanians also had the right to a common state, and beyond the position of the Comintern on the right to self-determination of the oppressed peoples.¹⁷⁸⁰

Yugoslav Communists, who participated not only in the founding of the Communist Party of Albania in November 1941, but also in the organization of the National Liberation

¹⁷⁷⁹ More about the demand of the communists of Albania for Albania to become the seventh republic of Yugoslavia see these authors: Dedijer, Vladimir: "*Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi 1939-1948*", Beograd, 1949; Hadri, Ali: "*Marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-jugosllave*", Prishtinë, 2003; Mugoša, Dushan: "*Shënime nga Shqipëria 1941-1944*", Vukmanović, Svetozar-Tempo: "*Memoari*" I, II, Beograd-Zagreb, 1966-1969; Đaković, Spasoje: "*Knjiga o Kosovu*", Beograd, 1984.

¹⁷⁸⁰ For more see Vladimir Dedijer: "*Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*", Third Volume, Beograd.

Army Headquarters and in all other structures of the National Liberation Council established by the Communists while also playing the role of local government, had the main say on the most important internal and external issues. They will even define the frameworks through which the Albanian communists should behave, who, on the political and war fronts, should not be presented together, in accordance with what Albania actually presented - as united, but that their political and military organization had to follow the structures of the already ruined Yugoslav state, where for the Albanians the border of Versailles still had to apply.

This division had great consequences, because the Albanian anti-fascist front led by the National Liberation Front would appear divided into two parts: the one formally led by the Yugoslav-supervised Albanian communists (within the borders of the Versailles Albania), and the other led by the Kosovo Communists, who, although formally affiliated with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the structures of the National Liberation War there, acted practically independently. This happened from the beginning until the departure of the Germans, in November 1944, when after the introduction of the Albanian brigades in Kosovo (third and fifth - always according to Yugoslav directives), supremacy and even swallowing up followed of the Kosovar and Yugoslav brigades, mostly with Chetnik formations converted to "partisans".

Before that happened, Kosovar partisans were fighting under the Albanian national flag, which was not always associated with the communist one! Among them were leftist-minded patriots who did not trust communism or the Yugoslavs, but were aware that in those circumstances the Albanian left had to be positioned in accordance with the anti-fascist alliance to secure the right to self-determination in accordance with the Atlantic Charter. As such they tried to make the anti-fascist movement in Kosovo as independent as possible, though in that way they were vigorously opposed by the Albanian communists, who began to carry out the orders of the Yugoslavs. Thus, the Mukje agreement, soon to be broken by the Albanian communists, as well as some of the strategic points of cooperation, ended. Thus, so the anti-fascist movement in Albania maintained its western affiliation with the eastern one, originate from the harsh interventions by the Yugoslav advisers to Enver, whom they kept close to themselves and far from any possibility of being influenced by the Albanian nationalists and the patriotic front, who were associated with the idea of national unity. Even as Enver, fearing the growing influence of the Albanian patriotic front and the support he was gaining from the Anglo-Americans, would seek clarification from Tito on how to act on the issue of Kosovo and its fate, as it posed a matter of importance for the unification of measures on the common anti-fascist front.¹⁷⁸¹

Regarding the Mukje agreements, but also about the tolerance of the tendencies of certain Kosovar communists who constantly linked the anti-fascist war with the right answer that it should give to the issue of Kosovo, as it was seen, Enver made a "sincere communist self-criticism" in front of Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša. He admitted "*that there were some opportunists from the front lines (Dishnica and Gjinishi), who will make it possible to accept the game of the Ballists for joint leadership and for accepting the idea of a greater Albania*",

¹⁷⁸¹ See Ivan Milutinovic's letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania on October 25, 1943, in which he brings to the Albanian communists Tito's messages regarding the position to be taken on the issue of Albanian unification and the request of the Albanian nationalists for its return in the main statement of the anti-fascist front. The letter states, among other things:

"I am informing you once again that you should not take the same position as what the Albanian reactionary bourgeoisie is taking, emphasizing that Kosovo should join Albania from now on, but that it should be given a common answer, since together we have won the war against the occupiers and their collaborators, so that later the people can declare what they want and where they want to go."

According to Spasoje Djaković, a participant in the National Liberation Movement of Kosovo, on the occasion of the opening of this case, that Enver Hoxha's envoys will present to Ivan Milutinovic, a close associate of Tito, when he was in Montenegro, will declare that "*as far as Kosovo is concerned, Enver Hoxha was still not released from the conviction that it should belong to Albania*", and that on this occasion, Tito will use the opportunity to warn him for the last time to give up this idea. (Quoted according to Spasoje Djaković: "*Sukobi na Kosovu*", Beograd, 1984, p. 398).

with which Albanian communists will never agree, since according to Enver “*it was a fascist creature that had to be fought.*”¹⁷⁸²

Here and on this issue lie the problems between the Albanian communists on the one hand and those from Kosovo, on the other, which led to the devaluation of the decisions of the Bujan Conference, of December 31, 1943 and 1 and 2 January 1944, in June 1945 at the Assembly of Prizren. This would give the green light to another captivity of Kosovo under the Yugoslavs, but now under the signature of communist internationalism and the platform of the ideology of brotherhood-unity, which manipulated it as a “magic formula” for a solution of all issues and problems “*inherited from imperialist and chauvinist politics*”, which was criticized with all its voice and blamed for the troubles left, though short of condemning the consequences starting from eliminating the cause, namely the Yugoslav imperialist and hegemonic policy against the Albanians that Belgrade had consistently led.

On the contrary, the Yugoslav communists, under the guise of demagogic formulas, will not only be able to restore the state structure of Versailles’ Yugoslavia in Kosovo, but at the same time, under the slogans of brotherhood-unity and communist ideology as a farce it will be up to them to restore the hegemonic weight that the Serbs had at the time of the Yugoslav Kingdom, which, as will be seen, only after half a century of domination of this state will it turn into a deadly disease.

THE SECOND LEAGUE OF PRIZREN AND THE INDEPENDENT ALBANIAN STATE

The capitulation of fascist Italy on September 8, 1943 was not unexpected. The Italian army was not ready for war even when World War Two broke out. This was also clear to Wehrmacht, though it needed such an ally, whose fighting power would be maintained with that of other allies from the ranks of the quisling countries. By the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, Hitler was more concerned with how the Italian vacuum would be filled than with the capitulation of its main ally. As for the Balkan space bearing an important role in maintaining the southeastern and eastern fronts, the Germans defended the position that Albania should be declared an independent state, as it restored the appropriate geostrategic and geopolitical balances in the region in line with the interests of the Axis Powers. The German Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, had presented a plan to Hitler for the formation of an Albanian national government, which “as such will be capable of negotiations and having a positive attitude towards us”.¹⁷⁸³

Ribbentrop’s stance was based on an analysis by the Wehrmacht t Operational Headquarters, which states that “Albanians demand their state independence. He who brings it to them is their friend. It should be expected that the Anglo-Americans, at the first opportunity, will declare Albanian independence. For this reason, it seems very urgent for the German side to make such a statement as soon as possible, in order to prevent the Albanians from returning to the side of the enemy.”¹⁷⁸⁴

On this occasion, Ribbentrop instructed his Ambassador to Rome and the Consul General in Tirana, emphasizing the need to make a political decision on the future stance on Albania, which will be militarily beneficial. An independent Albanian state will be able to provide Germany with the protection of the Albanian coast, especially the passages of Otranto, while

¹⁷⁸² Idem, p. 207.

¹⁷⁸³ Hass, Gerhard/Schuman, Wolfgang: “*Anatomi der Agession – Neue Dokumente zu den Kriegszielen der faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus in Zweiten Weltkrieg*”, Berlin, 1972, p. 120.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Idem, p. 119.

this state would not only politically calm Albania, but would turn it into a strong supporter of ours, where our forces will be very few but very secure.¹⁷⁸⁵

The German Foreign Ministry's authorized representative for the Balkans (based in Belgrade), Herman Neubacher, also followed these instructions. In early September, he contacted the Albanian authorities: Ibrahim Biçoku, Xhafer Deva, Vehbi Frashëri, and other Albanians considered pro-German, who were nearby, so that the new government of the independent Albanian state would be pro-German.

Immediately after the capitulation of Italy, on September 9, 1943, German troops disarmed Italian troops throughout Albania. Preparations for this action were carried out by the Germans earlier in August, when the German command managed to install in the country's strategic points a considerable number of military forces in the areas of aviation in Tirana, Shkodra, Berat, Vlora, Kuçova and elsewhere. It was estimated that this number reached 6,000. Following Wehrmacht's reorganization in the Balkans, in which the Belgrade-based F-ground force group was formed under the command of Feldmarschall Von Weichs, at the same time the Wehrmacht's High Command ordered the approach of certain military forces to march near Albania's borders, such as the 21st Corps, the 297th Infantry Division, which concentrated in the Mitrovica region.

Thus, on September 9, the first German units launched the deep movement in Albania: Division 297 from Mitrovica to Prishtina, Kukës and Shkodra; 100th Division from Ohri to Struga, Elbasan, Tirana, and Durrës. German troops were ordered to disarm the Italian army immediately and extend throughout the country.¹⁷⁸⁶

In Kosovo and Macedonia, German troops penetrated without hindrance. In various parts, their arrival was greeted by the country's leadership, being dissatisfied with the Italian army, which had begun to behave harshly towards patriotic demonstrations, persecuting nationalists. Although the General Council of the National Liberation Army and the General Staff of the Albanian National Liberation Army had issued a call to oppose the German army, there was no significant reaction. Some small actions and opposition were noted, such as the one in Xhyrë, at the Kardhiqi Bridge near Konispol and on the Korça-Janina roads, while with some parts, in the space vacated by the Italians, the power of the national liberation councils was temporarily established.¹⁷⁸⁷

Despite the small difficulties encountered by the German army during its deployment in all parts of the country, on the day it appeared in Albania the same day, the commander-in-chief of the German troops in Albania, General von Besel, issued a statement saying:

*"With the entry of the German army into your land, Albania's independence will be assured, as the great German Reich and its victorious army will stand as guarantor, which does not make any claims against your land. Your basic desire for independence will be realized through the help you will give to the German army."*¹⁷⁸⁸

So independence could be achieved *through aid given to the German army*. The German General also informed the important personalities of the country and the intellectuals during a meeting in Tirana. On this occasion, the German General warned of the cooperation of the Albanian left with the Slavic neighbors on the basis of communist ideology, as this was how they joined Russian Bolshevism.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Idem.

¹⁷⁸⁶ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", Vol. IV, Tiranë 2008, p. 77.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Idem.

¹⁷⁸⁸ "Historia e Popullit Shqiptar", Second Volume, Prishtinë, 1969, p. 721.

Since Germany, after the capitulation of Italy, in the new circumstances of the war with the defeat of the Battle of Stalingrad representing another major military concern for Hitler, had to reconsider its strategic position in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, where Albania and its territory were of great importance, it was necessary for this position to be followed by a different political treatment of Albania, so that it would not return into a concern, but rather into a safe and stable place for the Germans. This meant improving its social and political status in relation to what it had in Italy at the time, in which case, as stated, the idea came to Berlin that Albania should be recognized as a country with “relative independence” and “limited sovereignty”.

The German status project of Albania relied mainly on the idea that governance should be Albanian chosen by the Albanians themselves, i.e. in an Albanian state, where the Albanian union compared to the Italian one, would be improved and institutionalized in accordance with the Albanian position on this issue and its ethnic realities in the form of an “Ethnic Albania”, which would include Mitrovica and other areas that had previously been left out.

“Ethnic Albania”, which included Kosovo and another part of the Albanian territories, which had not found a place in the “Greater Albania” created by Italian fascism, not only had the support of most Albanians, but was required to come to life as soon as possible. This suited the Germans, who were interested in stabilizing the military situation in this very strategic part as soon as possible.

In order not to create an institutional and state vacuum and demolish the structures created by Italian fascism which had capitulated, on October 16 in Tirana the National Assembly was convened, composed of well-known intellectuals, representatives of capital, representatives of the provinces and clergy. The National Assembly took an important decision: it announced the partition of Albania from Italy and appointed the High Council of the Regency headed by Mehdi Frashëri, which consisted of Lef Nosi, Anton Arapi, and Fuat Dibra.

In a statement to the Foreign Ministry, Neubacher stressed that “we have taken steps to form a national committee” and that “we have thus directed our efforts so that this committee proclaims the independence of Albania and convenes the National Assembly, by which government and other state bodies will come out”. The announcement also pointed out that “in these crucial moments, the Albanians must take the initiative themselves, and the steps they will take will have the full support of Germany”.¹⁷⁸⁹

On November 5, the regime appointed the government headed by Rexhep Mitrovica, a well-known Kosovar patriot who had taken part in the declaration of independence in Vlora in 1912. As an opponent of Zog, he had emigrated and returned from fascist Italy and appointed member of the Council of State. The government of Rexhep Mitrovica included: Xhafer Deva - Minister of Interior; Vehbi Frashëri, son of Mehdi Frashëri - Foreign Minister; Rrok Kolaj - Minister of Justice; Sokrat Dodbiba - Minister of Finance; Ago Agaj - Minister of Economy, and Musa Gjylberku - Minister of Labor. In February 1944, the government of R. Mitrovica was supplemented with three ministers from the ranks of the “National Front”: Bahri Omari - Minister of Foreign Affairs, Koço Muka - Minister of Education, and Kolë Tomara - Minister of Culture. Lef Nosi, Bahri Omari, Kolë Tomara, Anton Harapi and others also entered the Regency.¹⁷⁹⁰

¹⁷⁸⁹ “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*”, IV, Tiranë 2008, p. 82.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Idem, p. 85.

The High Council of the Regency and the government that emerged from it will have the support of all Albanian social strata, with the exception of the Communists. Since it was run by well-known intellectuals and patriots such as Mehdi Frashëri, and would include representatives of the “*Balli Kombëtar*” (“National Front”) and “*Legaliteti*”, an opportunity was created for Albanians, liberated from the Italian occupation, to develop a cautious and well balanced national policy. Although in those circumstances this seemed difficult, especially realizing that the “neutral space” between the fascist and anti-fascist front, which the Albanian state needed to survive, not only was narrowing, but it necessarily demanded opting for one of sides.

In such a situation, however, Germany paid special attention to Kosovo and other Albanian territories (Macedonia) that had been under Yugoslav occupation. Knowing this, it did not accidentally engage intellectuals and political forces from these parts in the Albanian government and other administrative and state structures, and this gave new impetus to patriotic movements for national unity, which included a large number of Kosovar intellectuals who considered important, that whatever the circumstances of the war the world was going through, they should be exploited for this cause. Therefore, the nationalist movement in Kosovo (which also meant the Albanian areas in Macedonia that had been administratively and politically interconnected during the Serbian and Yugoslav occupation, with fascist Italy capitulating, hastened to take over the administration of the country in all centers of the prefectures and autonomous-executive sub-prefectures. This action, together with the disarmament of Italian troops and the acquisition of weapons depots in all centers, was successfully completed within two days, although in some parts there were attempts by communist troops to intervene. This was not allowed by the nationalists. They already knew more and more clearly that it was the time for this great change to be answered by the Albanians in accordance with the national interests. Among those interests, two were the most important: rescuing the country from the Slavo-Communist threat and maintaining national unity on the already started rails in such a way as to round off as much as possible, finding support from the international community.¹⁷⁹¹

To achieve these goals, at the initiative of a group of nationalists composing of Xhafer Deva from Mitrovica, Musa Shehu and Sheh Hasani from Prizren, Asllan Boletini from Mitrovica, Tahir Zajmi from Gjakova, Lukë Simon Mjeda from Prizren, Qazim Bllaca from Suhareka and Pjetër Vuçaj from Prizren, on September 11, 1943, a meeting was held in Prizren in which the situation was examined and the measures that should be taken for it to be used for the realization of these national interests.¹⁷⁹²

The following decisions were made at the meeting:

- *the convening of a general meeting with the spirit and breath of the League of Prizren, in which through the delegates elected by the people, all the provinces of Kosovo, Dibra, Struga, Tuz, and Ulqin had to be represented;*
- *The creation of autonomous-executive councils, assuming the responsibility of the local government and order until a supreme authority is established by the general meeting, and*
- *charging the executive council of Prizren with the preparation of the meeting of the Assembly, the opening of which would take place no later than September 16, 1943.*¹⁷⁹³

¹⁷⁹¹ See: Zajmi Tahir: “*Lidhja II e Prizrenit*”, Bruksel, 1964, pp. 33-34.

¹⁷⁹² Idem, p. 35.

¹⁷⁹³ Idem, p. 36.

Although in the short term it seemed difficult to cope with the organizational difficulties, they nevertheless faced the atmosphere of enthusiasm that had erupted throughout the country as well as the patriotic commitment to give this historic challenge the right answer.

Therefore, on the same day that the Constitutional Assembly was to be held in Tirana, in Prizren in an extraordinary festive atmosphere, delegates from all Albanian areas (from Kosovo, Tetova, Dibra, Gostivar, Ulqin, and others) gathered in the Assembly of Second League of Prizren, an assembly that would represent the continuation of the First Assembly of the Albanian League of Prizren in 1878, when in fact the first Government of an Albanian state after that of Skanderbeg had emerged.¹⁷⁹⁴

The assembly was held at the “Bajram Curri” school. It opened at 10 a.m. with a speech by Musa Shehu. He justified the decision to convene and hold the Second Assembly of the League of Prizren, emphasizing the tasks that Albanians face in those circumstances, which he said were among the most important for the fate of the country and the people. On the occasion, Musa Shehu also reminded the historical responsibility that intellectuals and patriots assume when this was necessary, and that it had to be clearly and boldly laid down, regardless of the difficulties and the dangers with which it is followed. He stressed that June 1878 was also very worrying and dangerous, but in Prizren, the united Albanians, with one mind and one attitude, took the oath to protect their lands, as they gave the political concept of an autonomous Albania which had to pave the way for an Independent Albania, accordingly.

“We must never forget the united Albania, nor our actions ... Even today we have this preoccupation, which we must make clear to the world...”¹⁷⁹⁵

After Musa Shehu’s speech, the Assembly elected Musa Shehu as chairman, Aqif Blyta and Rexhep Krasniqi as vice presidents, and Bedri Gjinaj as secretary.

On the first day, in front of the Assembly, the Presidency came up with a 6-point program:

1. *Conversation on the proclamation of the popular will for the unification of the territories of Kosovo, Dibra, Struga and Ulqin and Tuz as an integral part of Albania;*
2. *On the union with Mother Albania of the provinces of Mitrovica, Vuçitërnë, Podujeva, and Pazari i Ri, which are under the occupation of the German army, but administratively connected with the state of Serbia;*
3. *On the political and military organization of the people and the preparation of the protection of ethnic borders;*
4. *On the establishment of an executive body or the Central Committee based in Prizren and of the subcommittees among all the centers of the vacated lands to direct the necessary activities on the governance and protection of the country;*
5. *On the compilation and approval of a statute of the National Organization “2nd League of Prizren”, and*
6. *On the procedure to be followed for the election of the representation of the provinces of Kosovo, Dibra, Struga and Ulqin and Tuz for the National Assembly of Tirana.*¹⁷⁹⁶

The Assembly continued its work for four days in a row. It ended on September 20, 1943 with the approval of the basic documents (statute and proclamation) with the election of the

¹⁷⁹⁴ For more see Zajmi, Tahir: “*Lidhja e Dytë e Prizrenit*”, Bruksel, 1964.

¹⁷⁹⁵ Idem.

¹⁷⁹⁶ Idem, p. 40.

Central Committee of the Second League of Prizren. Rexhep Mitrovica was elected Chairman of the Central Committee of the League, while Musa Shehu and Kolë Margjini were elected Vice Presidents, both from Prizren, while Sheh Hasani from Prizren, Bedri Pejani from Peja, Asllan Buletini from Mitrovica, Tahir Zajmi from Gjakova and Qazim Bllaca from Suhareka were elected members. In the assembly, delegates of the Albanian territories (Kosovo, Dukagjin Plain and Sanjak) were also appointed for the meeting of the People's Assembly that was to be convened on October 16 in Tirana.¹⁷⁹⁷

In the Second Assembly of the League of Prizren, various Albanian provinces were represented by the following 42 delegates: Musa Shehu, Sheh Hasani, Lukë Simon Mjeda and Qemal Karahoda (*Prizren*), Sulejman Kryeziu and Hasan Dashi (*Gjakova*), Tahir Zajmi (*Kukës*), Halim Shuku (*Ferizaj*), Bejtullah Haxhiu (*Rahovec*); Nuredin Haliti, Qazim Bllaca (*Suhareka*), Haxhi Xheladini (*Shkup*), Nexhip Basha, Xhevat Begolli (*Peja*), Bajram Gashi (*Plava*), Shemsi Feri (*Rozhaja*), Adem Kurtaga (*Prishtina*) Mahmut Shabanpasha and Jusuf Agushi (*Gjilan*), Mehmed Devaja and Esad Berisha (*Mitrovica*), Asllan Boletini, Bedri Gjinaj (*Pazari i Ri*), Aqif Blyta (*Senica*), Hasan Zvezdiq, Vehbi Hamzagaj (*Bicaj*), Lutfi Spahiu (*Malësi e Gjakovës*), Bajram Haziri (*Struga*), Mentor Çoka (*Ulqin*), Safet Ulqini (*Dibër*), Rustem Ymeri and Shahin Cami (*Tetova*), Ismet Lusha and Jusuf Jaga (*Gostivar*), Remzi Ragibi, Rexhë Meta (*Vuthaj*). While as *Kosovars residing in Albania from 1913* the following were elected: Rexhep Mitrovica, Bedri Pejani, Xhafer Deva, Xhelal Mitrovica, and Maz'har Sopot.¹⁷⁹⁸

One of the main goals of the Second Albanian League of Prizren was to achieve the gathering of all Albanians in one state, which would include Kosovo and the Dukagjin Plain, Sanjak and the eastern parts of Montenegro, western parts of Macedonia, areas of Novi Pazar as well as in the South (Item II of the Statute).¹⁷⁹⁹

The Statute of the organization of the League itself through branches and sub-branches and the activity of the organization, which must be in accordance with the program (Item IV), with one of the main tasks of the League being the formation of military units which would serve to fulfilling these goals (Item VI). Item XI also defines the character of the reserve military units, which are held in continuous training to be ready to defend the country.¹⁸⁰⁰

In accordance with the Statute of the League, the government of Rexhep Mitrovica, under the auspices of the Minister of Interior, Xhafer Deva, began mobilizing and forming the "Skanderbeg" division, which would be involved in the fight against Chetnik and communist forces in this part.

The High Council of the Albanian State, on the proposal made by Letter no. 324 dated 12 February 1944, on 14 March 1944, approved the Statute of the Organization 2nd League of Prizren. The decree was signed by President Mehdi Frashëri and Prime Minister Rexhep Mitrovica.¹⁸⁰¹

In this way, officially, the "2nd League of Prizren" became the political platform of the new united Albanian state, which ensured not only the voluntary declaration of the united population, but also the administrative and defense structures, which had to be put at the service of the Albanian state, whose borders were constantly threatened and violated by the Chetniks of

¹⁷⁹⁷ Idem, p. 43.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Idem.

¹⁷⁹⁹ Statute of "Lidhjes II të Prizrenit" ("2nd League of Prizren"), p. 1.

¹⁸⁰⁰ Idem, p. 49.

¹⁸⁰¹ Idem, p. 51.

Draža Mihajlović, but also by the Serbian, Montenegrin, and Bulgarian communist brigades, which included also their Albanian allies.

PART FIVE RETURN OF YUGOSLAVIA

CHAPTER ONE REOCCUPATION OF KOSOVO AND MACEDONIA

NATIONAL RESISTANCE AGAINST YUGOSLAV-ALBANIAN PARTISANS

In Kosovo and Western Macedonia, in the years of the great upheavals of 1943-1944, in addition to the anti-fascist reality and the extension of its organization in the country by the National Liberation Council, which, without any influence and sometimes unnoticed at all, was extended beyond urban spheres and mostly was of an illegal nature, there was the real power of the Albanian State. At the institutional level, it included the social, administrative, military and political life of the country in the form of a common mechanism. It was decided in September 1943, by the National Assembly, in which after the declaration of the separation of Albania from Italy, the High Council of the Regency was appointed with Mehdi Frashëri at the helm, who on November 5 had appointed the Albanian government with Chairman Rexhep Mitrovica. The country's political spectrum included various forces, which appeared during the regime of Mustafa Kruja's government, with their activity intensifying on the eve of the fascist capitulation, in the summer of 1943, where as the most powerful appeared "Balli Kombëtar" followed by "*Legaliteti*".

Since the Ballists as the most widespread and consolidated political force in Kosovo and parts of Macedonia fighting for an Ethnic Albania had entered the government of Rexhep Mitrovica, it was natural that they, as the main political force that had ruled the country for more than a year, would take the main responsibility of protecting the country.

Within this responsibility the Ballists, who were the main force in the gendarmerie, together with other defense units led by the 2nd League of Prizren (the number of which was estimated to exceed ten thousand and from the point of view of military organization and equipment were supervised by Wehrmacht t), were put on duty from the beginning, in defense of the northern borders of the country (in the direction of Sanjak and the east, in the direction of Serbia), facing the Chetnik forces of Draža Mihajlović, who aimed to penetrate the northern parts of Kosovo. They did the same in Western Macedonia, when, a little later, after the capitulation of the Bulgarian forces, they occupied the space they held (in Skopje and Dibra), thus expanding the space of the Albanian state in those parts claimed by both the Yugoslav and Albanian partisans, with whom they were engaged in fierce fighting all the time, especially in the part of Dibra and the surrounding area, where the influences of the Macedonian-Yugoslav communists and the Albanians on the platform of proletarian internationalism were "intertwined", which in fact appeared as barometer of the Slav-Macedonian reoccupation of that part, as will actually happen.

The first fighting with the Serbian Chetniks took place at the end of November 1943, on the occasion of their attack on several villages in Peja and further in Rugova. The fighting,

which reached as far as Kollashin, lasted over three weeks, which, although with heavy losses for both sides, ended in defeat for the Chetniks.¹⁸⁰²

In January 1944, Pavle Djurišić's squad carried out a surprise attack on Morina, Montenegro, and Çakorr, but was repulsed with significant losses by the League forces. At the same time, there were Chetnik attacks in Shekullara, where Albanian forces counterattacked and occupied Shekullara.¹⁸⁰³

Chetnik attacks also erupted on the Tutin and Novi Pazar sides. They were defeated by the defenders under the leadership of Aqif Blyta, who was helped by the volunteers of Ukë Sadik Gjurgjeviku, whose brother, Sadik, with his forces, defended the border in the direction of Kollashin.¹⁸⁰⁴

The forces of the Second League of Prizren, although they did not have much time to consolidate militarily, had the responsibility of protecting the border in the northeast in a length from Sanjak to Karadak, first against the Chetnik forces and later against the partisan ones, which intensified in the summer and autumn of 1944 after the Soviet army had infiltrated Bulgaria and was about to cross into Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the German "F" Army had begun withdrawing from the south (Greece, Albania and Serbia) to the north, in an attempt to explode the Allied front line, which had begun to be deployed in Srem to prevent their grouping in the Danube-Elbe space from where the Germans planned to "stabilize and return" to the war against the Soviets and allied forces in central Europe and German space.

In line with these developments, the main forces of the Albanian army, those of the 4th regiment of Prishtina commanded by Colonel Fuat Dibra (Fuat Xhaferraj),¹⁸⁰⁵ were concentrated in the part of the border from Mitrovica to Gjilan and Karadak, which will face Yugoslav partisan brigades from the late summer of 1944 and during the autumn and winter of that year. In early September, Albanian forces of the 4th Regiment of Prishtina had a fierce clash in the extreme parts of Podujeva with Yugoslav partisans and some Bulgarian units converted to partisans, which were trying to penetrate Podujeva. On this occasion, three motorized Bulgarian divisions were destroyed, which were already led by the communists. The youth battalion from Vuçitërna "Hasan Prishtina" also took part in these battles, suffering heavy losses.¹⁸⁰⁶

The League's defense forces, along with other patriotic (mostly volunteer) forces, throughout the month of September, despite heavy losses, stopped the infiltration of the ranks of the Yugoslav partisans, who were attacking Kosovo from the northeast and south. But the League's forces were unable to withstand the constant attacks, as they were fewer, not properly prepared militarily, and worse, after the German forces withdrew to the north, being condemned as "fascist collaborators" and "quislings", both in Kosovo and Albania, nationalist and patriotic forces had been left without supply and solitary, and faced with regular Yugoslav military formations aided by Soviet partisans, these scattered patriotic forces were faced with inevitable joint loss.

Even as such, scattered and in a desperate situation, the nationalist and patriotic forces, in the fight against the Slav-communist occupiers, were nourished by a sincere genuine-popular nationalism, which was related to the protection of their thresholds and homeland. In some scattered military groups and formations (*Balli, Legaliteti, Lidhja, League, and others*) there was hope that the resistance, even as such, was worth continuing to the last point, because

¹⁸⁰² See Zajmi, Tahir: "*Lidhja e II e Prizrenit*", Bruksel 1964, p. 52.

¹⁸⁰³ Idem, p. 52.

¹⁸⁰⁴ Idem, p. 53.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Fuat Dibra was born in Dibër e Madhe in 1895. After finishing the course of officers in Tirana, he served in the Albanian Army. During the Second World War he served as an officer in many regions of the country, while in early 1944, he was appointed commander of the 4th Regiment of the "Kosovo" sector based in Prishtina. With this task he took part in the fighting for the protection of ethnic lands from Chetnik formations and Serbian and Bulgarian partisans. On November 14, 1944, he surrendered together with the Regiment Headquarters and was escorted by the force of the 5th Brigade of the Albanian UNC to Tirana, where he was arrested and handed over to the Yugoslav authorities. He was sentenced to death and executed in Prizren, on October 9, 1946. (See: Grainca, Ibrahim-Cërnilla: "*Deri në vdekje për atdhe*", Prishtinë, 2008, p. 32).

¹⁸⁰⁶ Idem, p. 54.

even as such, it would draw the attention of the Anglo-American allies, who, despite their agreement with the Soviets over the division of the East-West sphere of interest, could use the Albanian resistance to the advantage of expanding their sphere.

Evidently, this illusion will keep alive the resistance of some detached groups for the next two years. With it, they will leave for Greece in the hope that one day they would return to their free homeland.

But, with the beginning of the end of the Germans in Albania, came the end of the Albanian Government, which a year before had the approval of the German Wehrmacht and even Hitler himself, who received Xhafer Deva in Berlin, as President of the 2nd League of Prizren, whereas they also agreed on the “military training of Kosovo and the Albanian territories in Macedonia to defend themselves”, which began to be worked on. But it was too short a time, and the fate of the war was to the detriment of the Axis Powers, who would soon be confronted with defeat, which made it impossible for them to rise to the level of due responsibility.¹⁸⁰⁷

In these circumstances, it was natural for the government of Rexhep Mitrovica and, more recently, that of Xhafer Deva, with limited scope of action and dependent on World War Two relations, to experience the fate of their main supporters. Thus, the moments when the Germans were preparing to leave Albania, on October 26, the Albanian Government declared publicly an end of any activity and, with the help of the Germans, by sea, they left in the direction of Vienna and Berlin.¹⁸⁰⁸

The departure of Xhafer Deva’s government and its close leadership to the West paved the way for partisan triumph and the establishment of their power.

In Kosovo, the establishment of partisan authority at the same time meant reoccupation of Kosovo by the Slav-Communists, by having the initial support of partisan units from Albania (5th and 3rd Brigade), which would soon hand it over to the Yugoslav partisans. Their brigades (mostly Chetniks converted into partisans), with over 30,000 organized military forces, infiltrated from the direction of Podujeva, Skopje, and shortly afterwards from Çakorr, towards Peja, recapturing its territory hand in hand.

However, even in the difficult situation of the occupation of Kosovo by the Yugoslav partisan forces, the way having been paved by the partisans of Albania, the oath of protection of the homeland came to life in the form of an expression of armed resistance, which although will not to have a comprehensive concept and a common center of action, yet reactivated the language of disagreement with the Slavo-Communist occupation, which was reflected in the emergence of armed resistance to an already warned genocide that the country was preparing for by the Communists. It became even more ominous as it came from Belgrade’s long-standing hegemonic programs against Albanians and their living space, set by the new prevailing circumstances.

Although Yugoslav propaganda immediately resisted the scattered ballistic forces and other nationalist and patriotic groups against the Slavic-communist reoccupation of Kosovo (first in Ferizaj and then in Gjilan, which will be more pronounced from the beginning of December), still hoping for the promised Anglo-American landing, describing it as the

¹⁸⁰⁷ Regarding the defense role of the country from the Slavo-communist invaders, from the organizational point of view, the Second League of Prizren appears almost analogous to the structures of the First League of 1878. The first chairman of the Central Committee of the League Rexhep Mitrovica, who was also the Prime Minister of the Albanian Government of Tirana, had the responsibility of the defense forces of the League, which he was unable to perform. After him, this task was taken over by Bedri Pejani and finally Xhafer Deva. With the arrival of Bedri Pejani as chairman, the issue of the formation of regular military units of the League, which would be subject to its command, will be raised. The Second League of Prizren will decide to form its own branches and maintain the prerogatives of the central military command, which would lead the fight against the partisans as well as the defense in all circumstances from Yugoslav and Greek incursions and other attacks from abroad. On March 29, 1944, Bedri Pejani sent a letter to Hitler informing him of the League and its position on the formation of an SS division in Kosovo together with a military force of about 120,000 soldiers that would be able to defend Kosovo. In this case, he asked for assets and support to achieve this goal. (For more see: Zajmi Tahir: “*Lidhja e II e Prizrenit*”, Bruksel, 1964).

¹⁸⁰⁸ Idem.

“beginning of the great Albanian counter-revolution”, led directly by “Xhafer Deva’s secret headquarters”,¹⁸⁰⁹ - it had not been like that, nor had it been able to be so. No revolution in Kosovo, as it was called, had been won, but rather a reoccupation by Yugoslav partisan factions had taken place, overthrowing a legitimate Albanian government, proclaimed in October 1943 by its democratically elected legitimate representatives.

The fact that the independent Albanian state was born in the circumstances of the German occupation that had replaced the Italian one and as such was accepted by it even guaranteeing neutrality and that the Albanian nationalist forces in Kosovo and elsewhere were put in its defense and against reoccupation by Yugoslavia, this could not turn them into “quislings” and “servants of the occupier” with whom they had to settle accounts with revolutionary means after being declared “counter-revolutionaries”, but rather victims of a new state-ideological terror, which was about to launch a new communist dictatorship.

Therefore, from this point of view, the Albanian armed resistance in Kosovo and Western Macedonia against its reoccupation by the Yugoslav partisans and their Albanian allies, at the same time presented the first armed anti-communist resistance in Europe on the eve of the victory of communism in its east and of the launch of socialism as a state model in line with the ideology of Soviet Bolshevism.

The Albanian anti-communist movement, mostly focused on Kosovo and Western Macedonia, remained “detached”, unsupported and condemned as “counter-revolution” set by the Yugoslavs, because, as seen at the Yalta Conference, the Anglo-Americans were not ready to confront the Soviets - their powerful ally against fascism.

Under these circumstances, the alarm of the “counter-revolution”, ringing by all the bells, was used by the Yugoslavs in many ways to achieve their goals as soon as possible, and this was in accordance with the reprimands and threats they made to Kosovo since the Bujan Conference, according to which the entry of Yugoslav partisan units into Kosovo had to provide for the following:

- a) demolition of local government structures, issued by the National Liberation Conference of Bujan
- b) demolition of military structures of the Albanians as well as the melting of their remains in the composition of the Yugoslav army
- c) annulment of Bujan’s decisions regarding self-determination of Albanians to join Albania as a right that belonged to them in accordance with the Atlantic Charter and in addition to create the conditions for a “voluntary declaration” of Kosovo’s unification with Serbia by same forum, and
- d) beginning of settling of accounts with the Albanian nationalists and patriots, this time on behalf of the “collaborators of fascism”, getting rid of any Albanian who did not belong to the national liberation movement led by the communists.

Thus, without the dimension of “counter-revolution” and its alarm, the Yugoslavs would not have been able to declare a state of martial law on February 8, 1945, and without this “alarm” they would not have been able to create the conditions for the actual reoccupation of Kosovo and its annexation by Serbia, including the Assembly of Prizren held from 8-10 July 1945, although for this they had the approval of the Yalta Conference.

The label of the counter-revolution, in addition to Kosovo, had to act similarly in Macedonia, especially against its western part, so that the Macedonian project of ASNOM, which Tito had established in August 1944, would be implemented there, including a plan of a future federation in accordance with the decisions of AVNOJ of 1943.

Although the realities in Macedonia appeared different after the capitulation of the Bulgarians and the withdrawal of the Germans, in which case their place would be taken by the joint Yugoslav, Macedonian, Soviet and finally Albanian partisan forces, however, its priority remained “settling accounts with the Albanian Ballists and other quislings”, who had

¹⁸⁰⁹ See Djaković, S: *”Sukobi na Kosovu”*, 1984, p. 236.

great support in the western parts, where for nearly four years, the Albanian state (the one under the Italians and established by the Germans at the end of 1943 until October 1944), had exercised its power.

ČUBRILLOVIĆ'S SECOND MEMORANDUM AND CONTINUATION OF ANTI-ALBANIAN POLICY

That the Yugoslav reoccupation by the partisans in Kosovo and other Albanian parts of Macedonia would take this direction, reaching in four months the size of a genocide, the third in a row (the first in the winter of 1877/8 on the occasion of the second penetration of Prokuplje and Kurshumlja, the second in 1912, on the occasion of the occupation of Kosovo and other Serbian territories by the Serbian army), was announced by the Second Memorandum of Vasa Čubrilović, author of the first anti-Albanian Memorandum of Serbian academics by 1937, which was handed over to Tito in October, now as an elaboration with the working insignia: *"The problem of minorities in the new Yugoslavia"*.

Emphasis was placed on the final settling of accounts with the "Volksdeutsche" (the indigenous German population in Banat and Srem in the North, which numbered about 700,000). They had to be expelled from their lands on the label of collaborators of the German fascists and as such had to be persecuted ruthlessly.

The Elaborate also envisioned that in Kosovo and the Albanian areas of Macedonia - where, according to Čubrilović, there was a quisling government led by the Kosovar irredentists led by Xhafer Deva, described as a German top agent - the "counter-revolution explosion" should be declared", as soon as Albanians reacted to the various provocations, to be used into bringing them to the brink of explosion.

"The biggest problem we are facing is how to break up the blocks of minorities inhabiting strategic geopolitical positions," adding that: *"The federal government must bring all the power of the state to bear in solving this problem."*¹⁸¹⁰

Among these ways, as the most appropriate for the circumstances, he mentions war through which this vital problem can be solved.

*"The army must be brought in, even during the war, to cleanse the regions we wish to settle with our own people, doing so in a well-planned but ruthless manner."*¹⁸¹¹

In addition to cleansing Kosovo of Albanians, Čubrilović also demanded the cleansing of Macedonia's Polog, from them and other Albanian areas in Montenegro, which were also of great importance for the destruction of the Albanian ethnicity in Yugoslavia.

*"Kosovo and Metohija have always been considered a strategic area in the Balkans. By occupying the central part of the Balkans, Kosovo and Metohija separate Serbia from Montenegro and these two, in turn, from Macedonia. The countries of the Yugoslav federation will never be strongly attached to one another so long as they have no direct ethnic border with one another. This matter is of particular concern for Macedonia. The upper reaches of the Vardar river are held by the Albanians whereas the lower reaches of the river are in the hands of the Greeks. We southern Slavs hold only the middle portion. Our position is too weak... The fertile valleys of Polog, Kosovo and Metohija are important in economic terms..."*¹⁸¹²

¹⁸¹⁰ See Second Memorandum of Vasa Čubrilović: *"Problemi i pakicave në Jugosllavinë e re"*, November 1944, presented to Marshal Tito, published in "Mladina" of Ljubljana, 1990.

¹⁸¹¹ Idem.

¹⁸¹² Idem.

For the elaboration to succeed, Čubrilović sought the post of agrarian minister in the federal government with the promise that *“I will wholeheartedly make available all the knowledge and experience, in the service of the High Command of the National Liberation Army and the partisan units for the drafting of detailed plans.”*¹⁸¹³

Tito accepted Čubrilović’s offer, although it was never acknowledged that his tenure in the post was linked to some elaboration of the settling of accounts with the German minority and the Albanians in the circumstances of war. It was said that the Serbian historian had found a place in the cabinet of the first federal government thanks to Serbia’s proposal.¹⁸¹⁴

Regardless of the reasoning on how and why the well-known historian, Sarajevo’s assassin to Prince Ferdinand, instead of the director of culture or science, received the position of the agrarian portfolio, he will have at his disposal the entire necessary military and police infrastructure for him to achieve the set goals. And, as will be seen, Srem’s offensive of December 1944 and January-April 1945 will end in complete success and in line with Čubrilović’s program. What the Soviet spies won’t do on this front will be done by the Chetnik units converted into partisans, according to the well-known Tito-Subašić agreement reached with the help of the British. The partisans cleansed one by one the German settlements in Slavonia and Banat from the autochthonous German population on the grounds that they had been serving the Germans.

Two hundred thousand Germans mercilessly killed intentionally trapped on the front lines and six hundred thousand others expelled from their lands, forced to move permanently to Germany, is the “brilliant” balance sheet of the Čubrilović Elaborate from November 1944. In this genocide also allied (Soviet) military forces participated carrying the main burden on the Srem front.

In line with this elaborate actions will be carried out in Kosovo and in the Albanian areas in Macedonia, which, during the war, were part of the common Albanian state. Since there was no line of confrontation with the Germans as in Srem, but rather with the Albanian patriotic forces defending from the Slav-Communist reoccupation, which from a military point of view was unlikely to return to a lasting front, it was all done under the pretext for “the outbreak of counter-revolution”. This would justify the military campaign “for the cleansing of the country from the collaborators of fascism”, as well as the establishment of the military administration as its tool.

Although it will not be possible for Kosovo and Western Macedonia, and especially Skopje and its environs as an important link connecting the Albanian ethnicity historically and politically, to purge it of Albanians as Čubrilović demanded, the military situation will continue for six months resulting in the killing of over fifty thousand Albanians in various ways. This ordeal will take place on the fronts across Kosovo and Macedonia, through various deportations of several thousand violently mobilized people, forcibly sent to the death fronts in Srem and along the Adriatic, for covert liquidations, taking on dimensions of genocide!

In addition to the victims, the most serious consequences for the Albanian population was the communist terror, placed under the guise of popular power and brotherhood-unity slogans, which, with the decisions of AVNOJ, had separated them into two parts: under the power of Federal Serbia (Kosovo) and within the Republic of Macedonia (Skopje with Western Macedonia). This separation also emerged during the war, with the communist organization (Kosovo and Metohija and Macedonia provincial committees affiliated with the CLP Central Committee) and within the national liberation movement (as well as separate affiliates affiliated with that), led by Tito’s delegate for Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo.

¹⁸¹³ Idem.

¹⁸¹⁴ From author’s conversation with Fadil Hoxha in Prishtina, in 1994.

And, as the first measure of all that will turn into a tragedy of the magnitude of genocide against an unprotected people, forced mobilization of about twenty thousand young Albanians to be taken to the Srem and Adriatic fronts, with most of them never returning.

All this bloodshed against the Albanian people and its subsistence began in Macedonia in December 1944 with an extraordinary meeting of ASNOM in Skopje, which was attended by the highest Yugoslav communist leaders, among them Eduard Kardelj, Koliševski, and others, whereupon Tito's right-hand man, unveiled the platform against "collaborators of fascism and quisling forces" and "the necessity to settle accounts with them by all means",¹⁸¹⁵ and, in Kosovo, under the directive of Miladin Popović, who returned from Albania, on behalf of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Kosovo and Metohija (the name Dukagjin was replaced by a unilateral Metohija as a reaction to the so-called "Albanianization" of the party base of Kosovo to the detriment of Yugoslav affiliation). Thus, in Macedonia, the military decrees of ASNOM "for the fight against collaborators of the fascist occupier and quisling forces" and those in Kosovo by Miladin Popović, for "fight against the reaction and hostile forces", were addressed to all local party committees, turned into weapons of revolutionary power with great authorizations, demanding:

- 1) mobilization of Albanian youth and sending them to the northern fronts,
- 2) clearing the terrain from class enemies, i.e. those who had served the occupier and traitors of the country,
- 3) collect weapons from the Albanian population,
- 4) demolish all forms of previous organization of local government (National Liberation Councils) set outside the criteria of the CPY, i.e. those that were established during the NLW (Anti-Fascist Councils as a form of local government) and,
- 5) establish party organizations, those of youth, sports and others in the villages with Albanian population according to the "criteria" of fraternity-unity.¹⁸¹⁶

The beginning of the implementation of these measures, as well as the savage campaign of settling accounts with Albanian intellectuals, patriotic forces from the ranks of the former leadership in towns and villages, as well as the chauvinist rage by Serbian Chetnik units converted to partisan against everything Albanian, resulted in popular resistance. As such, it appeared first of all against the taking over of the Yugoslav partisan occupation units by the Albanian partisans, to whom the population of Kosovo and Macedonia, on the occasion of the penetration, had not responded by gun as they had entered with the promise that the Albanian government would be preserved. The most pronounced resistance will then be expressed against the violent mobilization and sending of Albanians to the war fronts in the north and through Albania and Montenegro to the Adriatic to reach the dimensions of an uprising of national proportions.

THE "NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT" (NDSH) OF SHKUP AND THE ALBANIAN UNION

The Albanian National Democratic Movement (NDSH) was born in the dramatic circumstances of 1945-1947, through which the Albanian world was passing on the eve of the end of the anti-fascist war, facing existential challenges coming on the one hand from the relations of the warring powers, with the left emerging victorious and thus determining the social system on ideological grounds, and on the other, from the spheres of interest of the great

¹⁸¹⁵ Pirjevac, Jože: "Tito i drugovi", Zagreb, 2012, pp. 386-390.

¹⁸¹⁶ See Djaković, S: "Sukobi na Kosovu", 1984, p. 236.

powers, by which Yugoslavia as a state maintained territorial integrity, which turned the Albanian social and political reality of the common years (1941-1945) into a state of division as determined by the London Conference and confirmed by the Peace Conference in Paris.

In these circumstances, the Albanian world was doubly handicapped: divided into two states, while ideologically united in the eastern sphere. The latter brought it back into the clutches of the Slav-Communist government led by the Soviet communist state with serious and unforeseen consequences, which as it just entered Kosovo and other Albanian areas that for several years had lived under the circumstances of a union, linked reoccupation to the state terror with which to settle accounts with Albanian intelligence, patriots and other forces fighting for a common, democratic and Western future. This was a war aimed at the total destruction of the historical consciousness of Albanians as an ancient people, which had belonged to Western civilization and its space.

Refusing to content with this situation in which their existence as a people and civilization was ruined, the Albanian nationalist forces, linked to the united Albanian state, regardless of the circumstances under which it was created, considering it as a right that always belonged to them, for which they had to fight relentlessly, opposed the partisan reoccupation of Kosovo and the Albanian territories in Macedonia. With this, they were also against the establishment of communism from the first moments of the departure of the German army and the warning of the introduction of Albanian and Yugoslav partisan forces because they knew very well what was being prepared for them and Albania, especially after the break of the Mukje Agreement by the Albanian communists under the direction of the Yugoslav communists.

The Albanian Army and other patriotic forces until then within the Forces of the Second League of Prizren, which had focused on protecting the country from Slav-Communist invasions, although scattered, had waged the first fights against the Yugoslav partisans. penetrating from the northeast (Presheva and Karadak) and southeast (Macedonia). A similar operation was carried out in the Macedonian Polog (from Skopje, Kërçova to Dibra), when nationalist forces recaptured the area previously occupied by Bulgarian forces, who had been terrorizing the Albanian population.

Indeed, the patriotic war, which lasted for more than a month, began in October 1944, after the fascist Bulgarian army had capitulated, and was replaced by those of Major General Xhemë Gostivari's units.¹⁸¹⁷

Xhemë Gostivari infiltrated the Skopje and Kumanova regions with patriotic forces, which joined the ethnic Albania. In Skopje, the Central Committee of the 2nd League of Prizren appointed Esat Berisha as prefect of the prefecture. Together with Esat Berisha, a group of soldiers arrived in Skopje, led by Qazim Lusha, Mehmed Bushi, Arif Drogomanci, Memish Bukovici, and Abdyl Durra, who, in cooperation with local leaders, established the combat headquarters of the Skopje prefecture. of which three battalions operated.

The Treska Battalion, commanded by Memish Bukovic, had 2,500 soldiers. The Bllaca Battalion, with 1,500 fighters, was commanded by Avdyl Durra and the Kopilaça Battalion with 1,000 fighters, commanded by Din Hoxha. The Karadak Battalion, commanded by Sylë Hotla, operated in the Karadak region of Kumanova and was connected to the Gjilan prefecture.¹⁸¹⁸

¹⁸¹⁷ Lita, Qerim: *"KQ i NDSH-së dhe Azem Marana"*, Tiranë, 2011, p. 45.

¹⁸¹⁸ Idem, p. 46.

Xhafer Deva, Chairman of the Central Committee of the 2nd League of Prizren, visited Skopje, Tetova and Gostivar as part of the activities for the protection of ethnic territories that were already part of the Albanian state established in October 1943 in Tirana, in October 1944. On this occasion, the national forces defended to the last the Albanian ethnic state, being threatened by the joint Slav-Communist alliance, and joint partisan units in the eastern part.

The unification of national forces after the liberation of Skopje and the expansion of Albanian power in the part of Western Macedonia, united the communist forces too: Yugoslav and Albanian, operating on the outskirts of the ethnic territory of the Albanian state, in the part in which Bulgarian fascists extended their power. As Yugoslav and Macedonian partisans on the outskirts of Albanian territory could not cope with the fighting forces of the 2nd League of Prizren, they sought help from Albanian partisans. Thus, in Peshkopia, the head of the CPM, Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo, Tito's envoy for the communist movement in Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania, and in general for the organization of the national liberation movement according to the Belgrade measure, met with Mehmet Shehu, Commander of the 1st Division of the National Liberation Army of Albania (NLAA). There, a decision was made to send NLAA units with Albanian flags to Kërçova and Gostivar, where the authority of the national liberation movement chosen by Albanians would be established.¹⁸¹⁹

In addition to the incursion into Kërçova and Gostivar through Albanian partisan bait, which was supposed to enter in order to restore "Albanian power", the Yugoslav partisans took over the penetration in Skopje. The NLAM General Staff authorized the 42nd Division with two brigades for these combat operations, on a front line of several kilometers. The fighting began on October 25 and lasted two days. Albanian forces commanded by Xhemë Gostivari, in the battle of Treska, almost completely defeated the partisan forces, with barely a small number of fighters escaping. More than 380 partisans were killed and many more were wounded in the fighting. Deep losses were also acknowledged by the partisans.¹⁸²⁰

The Macedonian brigades of 42nd Division, together with the Albanian 4th Brigade and the 4th Battalion of the 18th Assault Brigade of Albania, suffered similar losses in the fighting in Kërçova on November 7-8, 1944. On this occasion, the Macedonian and Albanian partisans were ordered to withdraw from the Albanian settlements.¹⁸²¹

The fighting was replaced by talks with several Albanian nationalist leaders to fight German forces in the retreat. On this occasion, the Albanian nationalists were promised that Struga and its surroundings, as well as Dibra, would belong to Albania.¹⁸²²

In addition to the Macedonian National Front, which fought against the Yugoslav-Albanian anti-fascist coalition, the defensive war took place in Anamorava and the Presheva Valley in October 1944, also with increased intensity with Slav-Communist and partisan forces from Albania to continue well into November and December. In the new circumstances of confronting large partisan forces, the national defense forces in Anamorava appeared with "Supreme Headquarters" under the leadership of Adem Gllavica, who took over the leadership of the fighting in Gjilan, Ferizaj and other parts of Anamorava, so that all of this in April 1945 turned into a broad movement of national resistance under the political platform of the

¹⁸¹⁹ Nasi, Lefter: "*Ripushtimi i Kosovës – shtator 1944 korrik 1945*", Tiranë, 1994, p. 48.

¹⁸²⁰ ДАРМ.1.255. 6479, 37А, 30.10,1944/1-3.

¹⁸²¹ ДАРМ.1.254. Телеграм до Втората Корпусна зона К.37/АIII,07/08.11.1944.

¹⁸²² Lita, Qerim: "*KQ i NDSH-së dhe Azem Marana*", Tiranë, 2011, p. 52.

“Albanian National Democratic Movement”, which had already openly declared war on a united, free and democratic Albania.

Therefore, it was no coincidence that the idea of a joint political-military organization, which would lead the Albanian resistance movement, came from Skopje and Anamorava at the same time, because exactly these parts, along with the Kosovo-Albania division in accordance with what it had brought by the London and Paris Conferences, and confirmed then by Yalta, the Albanians in the composition of the “new and democratic” Yugoslavia were given another division: both under Macedonia and under Serbia. The division into sister republics was even more severe as it affected the foundations of the Albanian ethnicity of Kosovo and Western Macedonia, which since the Albanian League of Prizren onwards had been the spiritual and political center of the Albanians in the struggle for national independence, with Prizren and Skopje sharing equally nurtured ideas of Albanian unification and statehood. Under the new circumstances, Prizren became the center of a province (oblast) under Serbia, while Skopje, the largest Albanian city from antiquity, the Middle Ages and during the Ottoman Empire the center of the Vilayet of Kosovo and the epicenter of historical developments (1878-1912) that brought about the independence of Albania, turned into the center of a politically formed nation (Macedonian), with the task of extinguishing the Albanian identity by means of methods of political and state violence (deprivation of national education, abolition of Albanian language in the administration, stimulation of emigration to Turkey, strengthening of Turks and others) until their physical extinction.

In response to this situation, when in Kosovo, Karadak and other parts of Western Macedonia patriotic forces from the ranks of the Albanian 4th Division and those of the National Front were fighting against partisan units and their terror, in Skopje, which after the capitulation of Bulgarian forces, for some time had been in the hands of Albanian nationalists, during March 1945, the “Albanian National Democratic Organization” emerged. This political party provided the war against the Yugoslav occupation and for the Albanian unification with a clear political platform.

The organization was founded in the house of Hysniqemal Ejupi, attended by: Azem Marana, Mahmut Dumani, Hasan Bilalli, Hysniqemal Ejupi, Nebi Jonuzi, and Nuredin Ibrahim. According to the organizers, NDSH, in the circumstances of the Slav-Communist reoccupation of Kosovo and Macedonia and its division between Macedonia and Serbia, had as its main goal the unification of Kosovo and other Albanian-majority areas with Albania.¹⁸²³

In order to achieve this, NDSH and its leaders pledged to establish fraternal ties with the Albanian nationalists in Kosovo and Albania as soon as possible, who were numerous but lacking a leading center.¹⁸²⁴

The founding assembly pointed out that special attention would be paid to the national uplifting of Albanians, expanding their desire and will for national unity.¹⁸²⁵

The establishment of NDSH and its national program did not go unnoticed. Albanian nationalists, who were increasingly aware that the communist people’s government was conducting an open campaign against Albanians and their being, began to join it, especially after the partition of their territory in many parts (Kosovo, Macedonia, Presheva Valley). It is

¹⁸²³ Lita, Qerim: “*KQ i NDSH-së dhe Azem Marana*”, Tiranë 2011, p. 69.

¹⁸²⁴ Idem.

¹⁸²⁵ Idem.

noteworthy that in addition to the devout nationalists who disagreed with the Slav-Communist reoccupation and the division it brought, there would be former partisans, city mayors and others involved in the ranks of the national liberation movement, disappointed by its deceptions, who will join the organization. Such was Rexhep Dauti from Tanusha, a police commander in Tanusha, Mulla Hajdar Kurteshi from Kumanova - former political commissar of Sylë Hotla's military ranks, Mehmed Bushi, military-officer and officer in Tetova and Gostivar, Jetish Vishi from Vitia and Gjilan, and many others from Western Macedonia, Anamorava and Karadak of Shkup.¹⁸²⁶

The rapid massification of the NDSH in Macedonia and its interconnection with Kosovo led to the various parts of the national resistance in Kosovo and Macedonia being interconnected militarily and politically, so that their war would be as successful as possible. Thus, in August 1945, the "Supreme Headquarters of Kosovo" led by Adem Gllavica invited a meeting of representatives of the Albanian insurgent units and NDSH organizations. The meeting was held in Tanusha, Kopilaça, on August 15-16, between Upper Morava and Karadak of Shkup.¹⁸²⁷

The NDSH Skopje Committee, which a few days ago received an invitation from Hysen Tërpeza for the joint congress, sent Qemal Skënderi, Mexhid Zymberi, Rexhep Dauti, and Xhemal Fazli Ferra to Tanusha, Kopilaça.¹⁸²⁸

Along with the representatives of Shkup (Skopje) the gathering was also attended by: Hysen Tërpeza, Adem Gllavica, Prof. Ibrahim Kelmendi, Luan Gashi, Tefik Tanisheci, Hasan Kabashi - Vitia, Din Hoxha from Kaçanik, Qazim Sefa from Llugaxhia, Qazim Soba, Hajriz Kajolli and others. The meeting was held at the house of Zylbehar Beqiri Ajvazi.¹⁸²⁹

Hysen Tërpeza, announced the connections established with the NDSH Committees in Gjilan, Prishtina, Prizren and finally with that of Shkup. The Congress was addressed by Adem Gllavica, Luan Gashi and Prof. Ibrahim Kelmendi, who unveiled the platform on which the national activity was to take place, the aim of which was opposing the establishment of Slav-Communist dictatorship, not to accept the partition of Albanian lands, and fight for Albanian unification in a democratic and free state.

The Congress appointed the General Staff of War, headed by Hysen Tërpeza, which also included Luan Gashi, Bajrush Xhakli (Commander of the Second Battalion in the mountains of Presedel), Rexhep Okllapi (Commander of the Third Battalion in the mountains of Keçekolla), Shaban Haliti (Commander of the Fourth Battalion), Syl Hasip Hotla (Commander of the Fifth Battalion for Kumanova and the surrounding area) and Din Hoxha (Commander of the Sixth Battalion). Adem Gllavica was also in charge of propaganda at the War Headquarters. It was decided that Prof. Ibrahim Kelmendi be delegated for propaganda in Shkup, where NDSH would have its headquarters, while Luan Gashi would perform the same duties in the parts between Suhareka and Prizren. Congress also appointed commanders of the four operational zones.

In the end, the Congress came out with the new leadership of NDSH headed by the patriot Halim Orana from Gjilan. Qemal Skënderi was elected deputy chairman and Azem Marana secretary of the organization. Members of the Central Committee of the NDSH were elected:

¹⁸²⁶ Idem, p. 73.

¹⁸²⁷ See: Bislimi, Daut: "Një vështrim historik Organizatës së NDSH-së", Shkup 1997, p. 49; Pirraku, Muhamet: "Mulla Idriz Gjilani dhe mbrojtja kombëtare e Kosovës lindore 1941-1945", Prishtinë, 1995, p. 323; Basha, Sabile-Keçmezi: "Veprimtaria atdhetare ilegale në Anamoravë", Prishtinë, 2013, p. 156; Arifi, Ferit: "Tanusha në rrjedhat e historisë", Tetovë, 2015, p. 191.

¹⁸²⁸ Lita, Qerim: "KQ i NDSH-së dhe Azem Marana", Tiranë 2011, p. 80.

¹⁸²⁹ Arifi, Ferit: "Tanusha në rrjedhat e historisë", Tetovë 2015, p. 192.

Hamdi Berisha, Mehmed Bushi, Hysen Rudi, Januz Balla, Mahmut Dumani, Hasan Bilalli, Haki Efendi Sermaxhaj, Osman Cani, and Mitat Tërshana.

The Congress approved several documents such as the “Scheme of Organization” and the “Program of the Movement for the Liberation of Albanian Lands” composing of five points:

1. *Freedom and full independence with the right to self-government on the basis of a freely expressed will;*

2. *Under Albanian lands means all the places where Albanians live, in 60% regardless of what is called the province of the country and by whom it is occupied;*

3. *The movement has no hostile attitude against any neighboring people, nor against political parties, and it only insists culturally and will try to achieve by arms the centuries-old ideals of the Albanian nation to be free and self-governing in its own state with ethnic boundaries;*

4. *Once the ethnic borders have been established, regardless of other border conditions such as those: strategic, economic, political, etc... the population of national minorities will be exchanged amicably, attracting Albanians who will remain outside the borders instead of those who will be relocated and moving out;*

5. *In peacetime, the Movement will not cease, but will continue as a guard service to the rights of the Albanian people, both domestic and foreign, to organize for a truly democratic regime and for friendly relations with neighboring Balkan peoples.*¹⁸³⁰

After the completion of the proceedings of the Congress, all the delegates in their centers started work for the establishment of local committees of the NDSH, which had to take over the implementation of the decisions taken in the Congress. Local NDSH committees were established in all districts of the country, which were affiliated with the Central NDSH Committee in Shkup.

The organizational scheme related to the center in Shkup had practical but also strategic reasons, aimed at the national character of the movement, with Shkup as an Albanian historical center opposed not only the division of Albanians into two parts (Serbia - Kosovo and Western Macedonia), but also demonstrated political and spiritual unity in accordance with their historical and ethnic rights.

The Congress of Unity in Tanusha of Kopilaça and the political platform that was approved there for military and political action in all parts towards the realization of the set goals: national unification and the fight against communism created an atmosphere of mobilization among dispersed groups, but at the same time raised the readiness of the Yugoslav and Albanian communist governments “in an uncompromising fight against reaction” and “their servants”, who were commonly identified as “quislings”, as this concealed real aspirations and goals such as national unity and the fight against communism. Thus, in Macedonia and Kosovo, the military government, which from the beginning had ruthlessly hit everything Albanian, had launched extensive operations in pursuit of members of the NDSH and their political and military structures, which were spreading on all sides. The head of NDSH in Skopje, specifically Prof. Ibrahim Kelmendi responded to this by opening branches of the organization in all cities of the country and extending their sub-branches in depth and by establishing contacts with foreign representatives in Macedonia, with the English and those of Turkey being of interest.

¹⁸³⁰ See: “Programi i Lëvizjes për Lirimin e Tokave shqiptar”, document, at Basha, Sabile-Keçmezi: “Veprimtaria atdhetare ilegale e Anamoravës”, Prishtinë, 2013, p. 72.

The first contacts with the representative of the British consulate in Skopje as well as with the Turkish one were made by a letter addressed to the English and Turkish diplomats, informing them of the position of the Albanians of Macedonia and Kosovo on the unification with Albania and that for this reason “thousands of Albanians are fighting with great hope that they will have the support of the West, especially from the Anglo-American factor”.¹⁸³¹

In addition to this general announcement, the Turkish consul had been sent another announcement informing him of the divisive actions of the Yugoslav government, by which the Turkish population was not only supporting Yugoslav policy towards Albanians, but some of its activists had been put at its blind service doing their best to declare themselves Turks.¹⁸³²

Professor Ibrahim Kelmendi urges the Turkish Consul to seriously consider this issue and influence the exponents of the Yugoslav government to abandon this policy, which could be detrimental to both peoples.¹⁸³³

But, in the wake of these political activities, undertaken by Prof. Ibrahim Kelmendi from Shkup for the massification of NDSH with considerable success, a decline of military activity and withdrawal from the activity of armed opposition to the Yugoslav communist regime is noticed in accordance with the decisions of the Tanusha Congress, when the “*Supreme Military Headquarters*” was established together with operational areas. This happened after Hysen Tërpeza, Commander of the “General Staff”, pursuant to a decision taken by the “General Staff” in early October in Tanusha, through a letter, notified the Skopje Center for the withdrawal of the “Military Staff” towards Greece. In this letter he asked Prof. Kelmendi to get the consent of the NDSH center for this action, justified by the position taken at a request that the military (Adem Gllavica and his associates) addressed by Mit'had Frashëri and Muharrem Bajraktari that they crossed into Greece to enter the service of global Anglo-American plans to overthrow communist rule in Albania and Yugoslavia. Whereas “the issue of the liberation and unification of the Albanian lands annexed by Yugoslavia will come as a result of the changes of the system in the two neighboring countries, Albania and Yugoslavia.”¹⁸³⁴

The NDSH Center in Shkup did not agree with this decision. Its Central Committee reacted with the view that it would fight until the fulfillment of national ideals. Mulla Idrizi from Gjilan, located with a few units in the deep parts of the Karadak highlands, reacted similarly. He demanded that the escape be revoked, because “it won't take long.”¹⁸³⁵

Despite the call of the NDSH Central Committee and Mulla Idrizi and some other patriots who were in the guerrilla units and fought as much as they could, the main military forces, led by the “General Staff”, from October 1945 and by December, had taken the difficult and dangerous path of retreat to Greece, many of whom would not be able to reach, as Yugoslav forces would pursue them and gradually in pursuit inflicting heavy losses to them, whereupon units were entirely wiped out.

Mefail Shehu-Zajazi was also killed in such an ambush, while taking the road to Greece with over 100 fighters, falling into a partisan ambush together with many fighters, who were waiting to join the rest of the units on the way.

¹⁸³¹ See: Lita, Qerim : “*KQ i NDSH-së dhe Azem Marena*”, Tiranë, 2011, p. 86.

¹⁸³² Idem.

¹⁸³³ Idem.

¹⁸³⁴ ДАРМ, Документе: 1.1101.06.12-579-640 .

¹⁸³⁵ Bislimi, Daut, op. cit., pp. 52-53, and Pirraku, Muhamet, op. cit., p. 327.

The last to leave for Greece was the group of Hysen Tërpeza and Hasan Kabashi. They took this road in mid-November. They were joined by other groups operating in Zhegoc, Kopilaça, Ferizaj and Kaçanik.¹⁸³⁶

With the departure of the main military units of the “General Staff” to Greece, together with the important military men that led them (trained officers), the strength of the armed resistance against the Slav-Communist regime began to decline. The latter had begun to settle in Kosovo and Macedonia in accordance with the realities of communist Yugoslavia, a reality that divided the hitherto Albanian ethnicity detached from its trunk in 1912 into two parts: that within the Republic of Macedonia - part of the Yugoslav federation, and in the “province” of Kosovo under Serbia. This division became even more difficult for Albanians because Shkup (Skopje), the ancient city and capital of the Vilayet of Kosova, along with Tetova, Gostivar and other parts of Polog, seceded from Kosovo, the center of this political gravity of the Albanian world from the Eastern Crisis onwards. Thus in the new circumstances both parts were greatly marginalized. As will be seen, the division and communist dictatorship will offer Belgrade and Skopje numerous opportunities to continue the well-known anti-Albanian policy reflected through assimilation and displacement to Turkey.

CHAPTER TWO

REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND YUGOSLAVIA

MACEDONIA AS TITO’S CREATION

Raising the issue of Macedonia from the geographical to the political issue, as happened at the end of the 19th century when it came into play for the hegemonic interests of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece led by Russia, as a coin toss for strategic purposes, gained its outcome within Tito’s Yugoslavia, as part of the federation of the new communist state established in Jajce, at the second assembly of AVNOJ on 29 November 1943. Jajce’s federal Yugoslavia was represented by six equal republics: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. The concept of the federal state of the Jajce Assembly received final “legitimacy” in the Third Assembly of AVNOJ in Belgrade in 1945, in which case the federal units, based on the decisions of the Jajce Assembly, declared “their genuine will” to join the new Yugoslav federation.

Of course, this “free will” of the new federal units was of an ideological character, as it stemmed from the National Liberation Council, a kind of popular power created during the war, under the directives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the main political force in an alliance with the world anti-fascist front (USA, Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France), came out with the “share” of the winner of the war.

Although the second meeting of AVNOJ organized by Tito’s partisan spirit and his Croatian and Slovenian communist collaborators had no legitimacy of a “local government”,¹⁸³⁷ as the so-called National Liberation Councils which AVNOJ was based were rather on paper

¹⁸³⁶ Bislimi, Daut, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁸³⁷ More about AVNOJ as an instrument of Tito for his political and military ambitions as well as his ideological concept to come to power at any cost with the help of Bolshevism in which case all possible methods of revolutionary war will be used, as was the partizan way, see Đilas, Milovan: “*Der Krieg der Partisanen. Jugoslawien 1941-1945*”, Molden, Wien, München, Zürich, Innsbruck, 1977.

than deed, as in many parts of the country they were not even constituted (in Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia) because the Versailles Yugoslavia, after the German attack of 1941, had disintegrated and in its former parts other states (Nedić's quisling Serbia, Independent Croatia) had been created or joined ethnicities from which they had been forcibly separated (part of Kosovo and Western Macedonia "Greater Albania" under the crown of the Italian Empire and the rest annexed to Greater Bulgaria). However, Tito managed to condition the joint partisan war, concentrated mostly in the mountainous parts of Central Bosnia, in relation to the great powers (USA, Soviet Union and Great Britain) with the return of the new Yugoslavia to the federal principles to be designed in accordance with "the ideological concept of the class equality of equal peoples", which, in the new federation, would enter "on the democratic will" gained during the anti-fascist war.¹⁸³⁸

The penetration of the Soviet Red Army in October 1944 from Bulgaria and Romania in the last battles for the liberation of the former Yugoslavia, as well as the victory of the partisans on the Srem front up to Trieste in April 1945, left Tito free to decide on the new communist state, but also on the new relations that would emerge in the region (Albania, Bulgaria and Greece), where Yugoslavia emerged as a regional factor, because the partisan movement it had organized and led, in relation to the Soviets, was "authentic".¹⁸³⁹

As during October 1944 until May 1945, Tito used the favorable ratio of forces created by the Soviet Red Army after its penetration into the former Yugoslavia (from Bulgaria and Romania) to settle accounts with Draža Mihajlović's Chetniks in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (until recently an ally of the British) and with "other remnants of the fascist reaction and their collaborators" in Croatia and Kosovo, the Yugoslav federation had to be "legitimized" by national liberation councils so that they, in the next meeting of AVNOJ, declare the new federal Yugoslavia.

In accordance with this strategy, Tito was faced with urgent and double tasks in Serbia and Macedonia using the introduction of partisan ranks and their terror against nationalist and patriotic forces for the creation of National Liberation Councils and Party Committees, the connection of which with the "center" was almost formal. Thus, in Serbia, the national liberation councils were formed after the penetration of the Soviet Red Army, in which case the organization of the Communist Party of Serbia at the national level was constituted, the basic congress of which was held in May 1945.¹⁸⁴⁰

To achieve this in Serbia, Tito did not find it at all difficult, as some formal connections between the CPY and a group of Serb communists linked to the Comintern (Ranković, Vesilinov, Koča Popović, and others) created at the outset of 1941, at the 4th local conference in Zagreb existed. Tito held the Serbian communist group close to him in the partisan headquarters, calling them "political and military representatives" of Serbia.¹⁸⁴¹

The Serbian "delay", in relation to the concept of AVNOJ's Yugoslavia, did not prevent Tito, after the blow he gave to the Chetnik forces in Central Bosnia and Eastern and Southern Serbia, through the Anti-Fascist Councils, where guerrilla groups and scattered partisan units

¹⁸³⁸ See: Bilandić, Dušan: "Historia Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije", Zagreb, 1979.

¹⁸³⁹ See: Pirjevac, Jože: "Tito, Stalin in Zahod", Ljubljana, p. 133; Dimitrov, G: "Dnevnik 1933-1947", Sofje, p. 528; Dedijer, V: "Novi Prijelozzi za biografiku Josipa Broza Tita", III, Beograd, 1984, p. 311.

¹⁸⁴⁰ See: Dedijer, V: "Novi Prijelozzi za biografiku Josipa Broza Tita", III, Beograd, 1984, pp. 447-487, and Pirjevac, Jože: "Titovi i Drugovi", Zagreb, 2012, pp. 90-102.

¹⁸⁴¹ Đilas, Milovan: "Tito. Eine kritische Biographi", Wien, 1980-

were commonly used, converted to popular power, to accelerate the establishment of “people’s power” in order to take over the executive duties, thus creating formal conditions for Serbia’s inclusion in the new federal state.¹⁸⁴²

So the absurdity would be greater, in Vis talks in March 1945 and others, where the physiognomy of the federal units (republics) was being decided, in which case Serbia, to keep it close because of its behavior being decisive for the concept of the return of AVNOJ’s Yugoslavia, two autonomous provinces were defined (Vojvodina with wide autonomy and Kosovo as an “oblast”), in the talks between Tito, Kardelj and Bakarić, no Serb participated.¹⁸⁴³

This is where Vladimir Bakarić’s famous saying originated: “We made Serbia with two provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina), although we did not have a Serbia yet!”¹⁸⁴⁴

The absurdity of “making Serbia” and without Serbs and without the federal Serbia being constituted, is very well explained by the case of Kosovo and its “request” issued by the Assembly of Prizren on July 10, 1945 in the circumstances of the state of war declared in March of that year by a decision of the General Staff of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NLAY) on the occasion of the “outburst of counter-revolution”, to “join democratic Serbia”, which its delegates Mehmed Hoxha (chairman of the Bujan Conference) and Dušan Mugoša (founder of the Communist Party of Albania) had to send to Serbia, but who had to wait for the meeting of the Serbian AVNOJ, in September that year, when the decision was made for a federal Serbia within the Federal Yugoslavia to be constituted in the third Assembly of AVNOJ in November 1945 in Belgrade.¹⁸⁴⁵

In such scenarios directed by Tito’s communist circle and beyond any “democratic” criteria, Macedonia will also appear, a political creature with an ancient name, although neither geographically, nor historically, nor from an ethnic point of view, as a new republic of the Macedonian people, had nothing to do with ancient Macedonia. While the “Slavic-Macedonian” fabrication of the late Middle Ages - a Bulgarian-Vlach-Slavic amalgam, detached from their social and political foundation - had not been able to create a stable ethnic identity.¹⁸⁴⁶

Even the so-called “historical background” from the uprising of Ilinden and the Republic of Krushevo in 1903, as emphasized in the Manifesto of the Assembly of ASNOM, “as a source of statehood”,¹⁸⁴⁷ lacks any lasting historical support, because neither in Ilinden nor in the short-lived Republic of Krushevo is the word Macedonia, nor the name “Macedonian” are mentioned. Even the slogan “Macedonia to the Macedonians” does not represent a stable political fact, as this call, by the Eastern Crisis, will be used as a conjuncture between the hegemonic interests of Bulgarian, Serbs, and Greeks in the region to divide them by ethnic claims, particularly of the first, who historically treated “*Ilinden*” as a Bulgarian movement.¹⁸⁴⁸

¹⁸⁴² Marković, Draža: “*Dnevničke zabaleške*”, Beograd, 1987; Bogdanović, Dušan: “*Istine bez distance*”, Beograd, 1986; Ćosić, Dobrica: “*Stvarno i moguće*”, Rijeka, 1982; Bilandić, Dušan: “*Povijesti izbliza*”, Memoarski zapisi 1945-2005“, Zagreb, 1999.

¹⁸⁴³ See Pirjevac, Jože: “*Tito i Drugovi*”, Ljubljana, 2012, and Dedijer, Vladimir: “*Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*” II and III, Zagreb, 1984.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Idem, p. 225.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Petranović, Branko: “*Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1978*”, Beograd, 1986; Pleterski, Janko: “*Nacije, Jugoslavija, revolucija*”, Beograd, 1980; Bilandić, Dušan: “*Historia Socialističke Republike Jugoslavije*”, Zagreb, 179; Vlačić, Gordana: “*Revolucija i nacionalno pitanje*”, Zagreb, 1984; Pirjevac, Jože: “*Jugoslavija 1912-1992*”, Trieste, 1990.

¹⁸⁴⁶ See: Cvijić, Jovan: “*O etnografiji Makedonskih Slovena*”, Beograd, 1906.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Димитрова, Евгени: “АСНОМ“, документи, Скопје, 1996.

¹⁸⁴⁸ See: “*История в България*“, Софија, 1981; Василев, В. А.; Божин Војнов: „*Българската Просвета в Македонија и одридска Тракија 1878-1913*“, 1982.

Thus, the former Vilayet of Kosova and partly that of Manastir until 1912, mostly inhabited by ethnic Albanians, such as the Banovina of Vardar during the Yugoslav kingdom, to which even Belgrade denied any Macedonian ethnic and historical identity, becoming proclaimed Serbs and, while Bulgaria continued to treat it as Bulgarian “cream” from the kingdom of Samuel, was turned by the Yugoslav communists into a republic, determined to join the Yugoslav federation. It will also be granted a “Macedonian nation”, as an “indigenous people”, although from the end of the 19th century onwards it appears as a “Slavic-Macedonian” name, without national and cultural identity.¹⁸⁴⁹

This act and its “validation” paved the way for the united partisan forces (Yugoslav, those from Albania and partisan ranks from Kosovo and Macedonia), created during or after the withdrawal of German forces, which after a three months war with Albanian nationalist forces in Kosovo and Western Macedonia, united in a life-and-death struggle against the Slav-Communist reoccupation, entered those parts to declare the victory of the anti-fascist front and at the same time victory of the “new communist government” under the guise of a “new” Macedonian states.¹⁸⁵⁰

The validation for this “victory”, however, in Macedonia, had its prelude, slightly special, in the fact that the space of the Vardar Banovina, which was occupied by Serbia in the First Balkan War and during the First World War, for four years during World War II had been partly under Bulgaria and partly under Albania. Thus, in these parts, the few communist organizations had been on the lookout and only on paper related to Tito’s CPY. The same was true of the national liberation councils of Tempo’s notebooks, which began to emerge from it after the capitulation of Italy in 1943 and the capitulation of fascist Bulgaria in September 1944.

¹⁸⁴⁹ Regarding the “Slavo-Macedonian” amalgam without ethnic and cultural identities, commonly referred to as the “Slovenian popular mass”, the well-known Serbian ethnographer Cvijić says that the popular Macedonian Slovene mass has no consciousness because it has not had an independent historical past, nor its own literary language. “Therefore, there are three views about this Slovene population: that it is close to the Serbs, that it is of Bulgarian blood and perhaps linguistically independent.” Accordingly, Cvijić concludes that “there are no meritorious ethnographic facts by which the popular Slavic masses could be called Serbian or Bulgarian. Even about the name “Bulgarian” with which the Macedonian Slavs are identified, it is not an ethnographic name, which according to Cvijić, “this population does not have defined feelings of ethnicity, ethnicity of ethnic pertaining of a certain population, as it does not have neither the Serbian nor the Bulgarian conscience, although it is close to both Serbs and Bulgarians. (See: Cvijić, Jovan: “*O etnografiji Makedonskih Slovena*“, Beograd, 1906, pp. 6-9.). These assessments are also opposed by many pro-Bulgarians and pro-Serbs, who try to make the Slavic population “Bulgarian” or “Serb” respectively. Thus, J. Ivanoff in his book “*La Question Macedonienne*“, Paris 1920, defends the view that the population of Macedonia is linguistically and ethnically Bulgarian, while Macedonia is valued as a historical concept adopted by the Middle Ages, unknown to the Ottoman Empire, to be returned to the “historical scene” with the Bulgarian uprisings. Viktor Grigorovic also calls all Macedonian Slavs Bulgarians, while their language as Bulgarian. He supports these theses in P. J. Shafarik, B. Dimov, and others. (See: K. Cestreich “*Die Bevölkerung von Makedonien*“, Georg. Zeitschrift, 1905, p. 285). The theses about pro-Serbian Macedonia and the predominantly Serb population there, including Albanians “Islamized by the Ottomans”, are spread by Jastrebov, Spiridon Gopcevic (“*Makedonien un Alt Serbien*“, Wien, 1889), Hadjivasiljevic: (“*Arnauti-naše krvi arnautashi*“, Beograd, 1938), Orlovic, P: (“*Stara Srbija i Arbanasi*“, Beograd, 1901), Stojancevic V.: (“*Kosovo i Metohija u srpsko-arbanaškim odnosu u XIX veku 1804-1878*“), Beograd, 1994) etc., whose attitudes coincide with political propaganda for hegemonic purposes.

¹⁸⁵⁰ On the cooperation of the communist movement and the partisan warfare within the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Front between Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria, as well as the joint operations of partisan units in Macedonia and Kosovo after the capitulation of Bulgaria in September 1944 and the withdrawal of German forces from Greece, Albania, and Yugoslavia in October-December 1944, see extensively: Dedijer, Vladimir: “*Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*“, 1986; “*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*” IV, Tiranë, 2002; Kodra Masar: “*Shqiptarët e Maqedonisë gjatë Luftës së Dytë Botërore 1939-1944*“; Vukmanovic, Svetozar-Tempo: “*Revolucija koja teče*“, Beograd, 1982; Старова, Вулнет: “*Заедничко живljenje - албанската народност во СР Македонија*“, 1988; Никодиновски, Борис: “*Одбрандеба регионализација на Република Македонија*“, 1994; Lleshi, Haxhi: “*Vite, njerëz, ngjarje*“, Tiranë, 1996; Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Shpresa dhe zhgënjimi i shqiptarëve gjatë dhe pas Luftës së Dytë Botërore*“, Pejë, 2000; “*Историја на Македонски Народ*“, Скопје, 1999; “*Македонија 1945-1995*“, Скопје, 1996; Lita, Qerim: “*Territoret lindore shqiptare 1912-1960*“, Shkup, 2012, and “*Tokat e bashkuara 1941-1944*“, four volume documents, Shkup, 2014.

The same will happen with virtually symbolic partisan ranks and outside any military activity,¹⁸⁵¹ which, on Tito's directives turned into battalions and corps overnight.

A similar situation was in the part of Western Macedonia (Tetova, Gostivar, Dibra) returned within Greater Albania during the Italian occupation and after the arrival of the Germans within the Independent Albanian State, declared by the League of Prizren from October 1943 to October 1944, when power was held by nationalist forces, while partisan groups were being regrouped by Macedonian-populated areas.¹⁸⁵²

But Tito, as he had dealt with other political realities after the break-up of Versailles Yugoslavia in June 1941, upholding the idea of a "common state" by joint party organization and national liberation councils "as a popular power" within the broad anti-fascist alliance, had acted similarly to the areas of the Zeta and Vardar Banovina (former Vilayet of Kosova and Manastir occupied by Serbia in 1912), preserving the "link" of party affiliation with the Yugoslav "maternity". For this reason, in the most sensitive part of the geopolitical and geostrategic points from the eastern crisis onwards, Tito had sent a very cunning but very strategic collaborator, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, responsible for the "communist base" in the Skopje-Tirana-Belgrade triangle, as well as for the national liberation councils, which had to maintain this definition.¹⁸⁵³

In fact, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo had not only managed to monitor the situation in accordance with Tito's party-level directives, but also socially and politically. By not confronting the realities (the Bulgarian unification for the most part and the Albanian one in the western part), but instead in the circumstances, agitating for a "common anti-fascist struggle that would at the same time bring national liberation from Yugoslav occupations", he had managed to link the "idea of liberation" to the Yugoslav communist movement and their party organizations. In addition to his party affiliation with the Yugoslav "base", Tempo had managed to bring the anti-fascist front (partisan factions in Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo) under the supervision of the Yugoslav National Liberation Front, led by Tito and his communist group after the second meeting of AVNOJ, in November 1943 in Jajce had set the platform of power that would be established after the war within the Federal Democratic Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁵⁴

In this way, notably, Tempo prevented two strategic developments in Albania: unification of the Albanian anti-fascist front reached in Mukje, which would preserve the Albanian union on ethnic proportions, partially restored after the destruction of the Versailles Yugoslavia in 1941, and at the same time, always in accordance with this concept, preventing the implementation of the Bujan Resolution of December 1943, January 1944, which would set the conditions for Kosovo that due to an internationalist reconciliation of the Albanian and Yugoslav communists, Kosovo would be reoccupied by Yugoslav partisans remaining under Serbia as an "oblast". While in Macedonia, with the establishment of the Communist Party of

¹⁸⁵¹ The situation outside the Yugoslav supervision (of the party and the partisan movement) in Macedonia in the circumstances of the Bulgarian occupation as well as in the parts of Macedonia that had returned to Albania, is best reflected by Dobrivoje Radosavljević, Tito's envoy to Macedonia in 1943, on the occasion of his arrival in Skopje to lead the partisan movement. In a letter sent to Tempo, Radosavljević wrote, among other things, that "Partisan units organized during the summer months of 1942 have been destroyed, so only a few fighters have survived and they are hiding with their friends in towns and villages. A convoy has managed to cross into Aegean Macedonia and is in the villages around Fellërina and Kostur to spend the winter." Radosavljević speaks similarly of YCL party organizations. He says that in many places they have been dispersed, because the leading cadres have either been killed or arrested and are found in prisons and concentration camps. (See: Vukmanović, Svetozar-Tempo: „*Revolucija teče dalje*“, memoari I, II, Ljubljana, 1972.)

¹⁸⁵² Vukmanović, Svetozar-Tempo: „*Revolucija teče dalje*“, memoari I, II, Ljubljana, 1972.

¹⁸⁵³ Idem.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Idem.

Macedonia affiliated with the CP of Yugoslavia (although with a handful of mostly Macedonian members affiliated with Serbia, where there were also some Albanians)¹⁸⁵⁵ and the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council of Macedonia, i.e. separated from Bulgaria, connected with Yugoslavia, although it did not exist as such, had managed to exclude the Bulgarian party organization and with it the increased Soviet influence.¹⁸⁵⁶

In Macedonia, however, these developments were related to the last stage (autumn 1943-May 1945) as well as the circumstances brought first by the capitulation of Italy, followed by the capitulation of fascist Bulgaria, while after the penetration of the Red Army in Romania and Bulgaria, the anti-fascist front was in full offensive and an inevitable victory was expected, as would happen in May 1945.

On the eve of these changes but also during them, Tempo appeared as the pivot of all the quick actions by which the anti-fascist war through partisan sides, even if symbolic from the end of 1942 in some isolated areas on the border with Aegean Macedonia, and the party base in Macedonia, had to submit to Tito's Yugoslav concept. In this development, always in line with Tempo's strategy that the space vacated by Bulgarian and German fascists in Macedonia and Kosovo should not be allowed to be taken apart by "Albanian nationalist forces and the remaining collaborators of fascism" even though those in Western Macedonia rated as very strong and well organized,¹⁸⁵⁷ Yugoslav partisans will be involved with their ranks from Serbia and Montenegro as well as local ones, created late and ad-hoc, which had to be supplemented by others in a speedy and large mobilization that had begun. They also had to be followed by the formation of national liberation councils as a temporary popular power, with which all "nationalist" structures would be fought.

Under the circumstances, the last stage of Tito's battle for the concept of a new federal Yugoslavia and the creation of its units in accordance with the decisions of the first AVNOJ from 1943 began, where Macedonia was of particular importance because on the one hand, any Western project to hold ethnic Albania was thwarted, as a possible response to Soviet plans to bring the Balkans into the sphere of influence in line with the penetration of the Red Army, which was approaching the Adriatic and Italy, and on the other hand, with the surrender of Kosovo to Serbia, the "Serbian reaction" would calm down a little, because the creation of Macedonia eventually removed it from the "Bulgarian issue" to turn it into a Yugoslav one always consistent even with Serbian interests in it.

But the battle for Macedonia, where Tempo with his long-infiltrated headquarters towards the Yugoslav-leaning Macedonians and left-leaning Albanians, who increasingly dominated the Anti-Fascist Front and the structures of the national liberation councils that emerged from it, was also encouraged by the weight that Tito gained in the rivalry between the major blocs within the anti-fascist front: between the communist one led by Stalin and the western one led by the US and the British, where he emerged as a very important factor in the

¹⁸⁵⁵ See: Musliu, Abdullah: "Ditari 1941-1945", Ferizaj, 2016.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Vukmanović, Svetozar-Tempo: "Revolucija teče dalje", Memoari I, II, Ljubljana, 1972.

¹⁸⁵⁷ In his book "Revolucija teče dalje" ("Revolution goes on"), III, Ljubljana, 1972, Tempo describes in detail the situation in Western Macedonia after the capitulation of fascist Italy in 1943, in which case the Albanian National Front, which he calls "Ballist power", held power. "They were ready to impose the holding of Dibra with weapons within Albania, because the partisans from Albania, on the other hand, did not have enough power, and they were also not ready to oppose such goals of the Ballists. A way out had to be sought in an agreement between the Albanian and Macedonian partisans. They had to resist the intentions of the Ballists to establish their power in the city, if necessary, even by force. In addition a new power had to be built with an equal participation of both peoples. Citizens would be allowed to fly the Macedonian or Albanian flag. The equality of the Albanian language with the Macedonian one would be proclaimed (See: Book III, p. 108).

war, as his partisans were the only ones who could influence the defeat of the fascist forces in the region without allowing it to be entirely dominated by the Soviets. Of course, aware of the weight he had gained after defeating the Serbian Chetnik forces in the ranks of the Nazis and linking fate to the inevitable losers, Tito would also use the situation to reach an agreement with the Soviets, to turn with their approval in a regional communist leader and rightly so, because he had long dominating the entire Communist Party in Albania and the anti-fascist front there. During his meeting with Stalin in Russia, where he was received with great honors, Tito “took the lead” over Dimitrov. This was best seen in the creation of a joint partisan front between the Bulgarian fronts and those that would be formed quickly by the Yugoslavs, in which Macedonians and Albanians would participate, but which would be led by the General Staff of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, that is, Tito, who already appeared as a marshal.¹⁸⁵⁸

Evidently, with this agreement, that is, with the agreements with Dimitrov (until then Stalin’s main collaborator for the Balkans), Tito, in addition to becoming the Allies’ first address to the region, also managed to remove Bulgaria’s known claims to Macedonia as a “Bulgarian province”, while considering the Macedonians as “genuine Bulgarians”. This created the conditions for a new Balkan (of course communist) federation between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, a “mini” Soviet state in the Balkans, under Tito’s leadership, which could have happened if Stalin had not intervened, who quickly investigated that the Balkan federation under the cunning Tito and with its increased political weight in the region could be a boomerang on the Soviet Union, out of the possibility of American influence turning into a “divisive factor” for the communist world.¹⁸⁵⁹

In Macedonia, the creation of “popular power” structures again belonged to Tito’s “political architect” for the Macedonia-Kosovo-Albania triangle, S. V. Tempo. It was expected that the man who with great skill had succeeded in infiltrating the communist influence in all parts and subscribing for “the common future of all the peoples oppressed until yesterday” even where this was utterly absurd (Western Macedonia, where the united Albanian state had given Albanians dignity and national culture), to take over this work. Thus, on August 1, 1944, he convened the ASNOM Assembly (Антифашистичко Собрание на Народното Ослободување на Македонија), held, not coincidentally at the Prohor Pchinski Monastery (near Kumanova)¹⁸⁶⁰

The assembly, chaired by Tempo and his associates and attended by US, British and Soviet military representatives, 116 delegates declared the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia within the Federal Yugoslavia of AVNOJ in Jajce, November 29, 1943. The Republic of Macedonia was declared a state of the Macedonian nation, whose origins were linked to the Ilinden Uprising and the Republic of Kruševo in 1903, although in it there was no mention of the name Macedonia at all.¹⁸⁶¹

¹⁸⁵⁸ The rank of “Marshal” was granted to Tito at the AVNOJ meeting in Jajce on November 29, 1943. According to Tito’s biographer, V. Dedijer, the rank of Marshal was used by Tito even before he received it, on several decrees in relation to the British, who had to be forced to recognize both political and military power in relation to that of the Yugoslav Kingdom, which will happen in early 1944. (See: “*Novi prijedlozi za biografiku Josipa Borza Tita*”, 1984, and Gibonskii, Leonid: “*Sovjetski Sojuz i Novaja Jugoslavija 1941-1947*”, Moskva, 1987).

¹⁸⁵⁹ Dedijer, Vladimir: “*Izgubljeni boj J.V. Stalina 1948-1955*”, Ljubljana, 1969.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Христов, Александар: “*Место и значувањето на АСНОМ во националната и државноправната историја на македонски народ*”, Скопје, 1997.

¹⁸⁶¹ Горги Цаца: “*Уставотформиот карактер на првото заседание на АСНОМ*”, Скопје, 1995.

Of the documents approved in the Assembly: ASNOM's basic statement,¹⁸⁶² the Manifesto in the form of a proclamation addressed to the people,¹⁸⁶³ the decision to create the Macedonian language (although linguistically a Bulgarian dialect) and its official language with the Cyrillic alphabet of Vuk Karadžić, the character of the Macedonian state and nation emerged.¹⁸⁶⁴

The manifesto addressed to the Macedonian nation, allegedly based on the idea of Macedonian patriotism that had created the new state based on the traditions of Ilinden and the Republic of Kruševo, connected it with a call to the "Macedonians" in Greece and Bulgaria to join the idea of "Macedonian revival", that is, to have Macedonians declare themselves in their countries and to fight there for their denied national rights.¹⁸⁶⁵

In this respect, ASNOM, organized under the direction of Tito's communists, was a major turning point as it did not itself reject and deny the Bulgarian ethnic and linguistic character of the Slavic population in this part, known as such historically and linguistically, but shifted it from a crisis factor between the Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece) and their hegemonic interests over a geographical area, which mostly included two of the four Albanian vilayets (of Kosovo, Manastir), within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, in a Yugoslav reality, as part of the new federation, as an equal republic of the newly proclaimed Macedonian nation, among six others. His mission was to replace Yugoslav hegemony with "new Yugoslav patriotism" on an ideological basis in which a "class equality" would bring down the oppressive class and replacing it with new anti-fascist forces, able not only to correct the injustice of the past, but to build an equal society on the principles of "brotherhood-unity of peoples".

But in the ASNOM Declaration, the language of proletarian internationalism converted the well-known formula of equality to "the return of Macedonians denied in history" and "their state". Thus, the proclamation of the state of Macedonia is called "an historic achievement of the Macedonian nation" in accordance with "its freedom-loving traditions". In this statement, Albanians are not mentioned at all as part of a historical ethnicity since antiquity. It was only about the "citizens" who would enjoy all democratic rights.¹⁸⁶⁶

From other accompanying documents: The statement on the organization of popular power through national liberation councils and those related to the organization of partisan ranks, emphasized the issue of restoring "Macedonian power" in the "liberated" areas in Western Macedonia (Dibra, Gostivar, Tetova), as well as the necessity to be given to the "fascist reaction" and their bearers, which meant the settling of accounts with the Albanian nationalist and democratic forces, who did not agree with the return of the Slav-communist government.¹⁸⁶⁷

In the ASNOM Assembly, with the proclamation of Macedonia as a Macedonian state, Tito managed to separate Macedonia from the Bulgarian-Romanian concepts created since San

¹⁸⁶² Христов, Александар: "Место и значувањето на АСНОМ во националната и државноправната историја на македонски народ", Скопје, 1997.

¹⁸⁶³ Горги Цаца: "Уставотформниот карактер на првото заседание на АСНОМ", Скопје, 1995.

¹⁸⁶⁴ Димитрова, Евгени: "АСНОМ", документи, Скопје, 1996.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Христов, Александар: "Место и значувањето на АСНОМ во националната и државноправната историја на македонски народ", Скопје, 1997.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Диминова, Евгени: АСНОМ, документи. Скопје, 2000, and Lita, Qerim: "Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974", in six volumes, Shkup, 2018, Book One: Anti-Communist Resistance.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Христов, Александар: "Место и значувањето на АСНОМ во националната и државноправната историја на македонски народ", Скопје, 1997.

Stefano and on, as well as the ongoing hegemonic claims of the Eastern Crisis. He also managed, through the creation of Macedonia, to detach it from the assimilation policy of Serbia and its population, which from 1912, when it was occupied by Serbia, turning it to Vardar's Banovina, had lost its Macedonia name, while the Slavs there were treated as Serbs.

But with ASNOM, Tito managed to exclude ethnic Albanians from state ownership, as well as the right to be equal, even in accordance with the communist doctrine of "brotherhood-unity". Thus, for the Albanians of Kosovo and those of Western Macedonia, many of whom had believed that the anti-fascist war they had joined would meet the ideals of equality, including that of the historical right to a common state, the victory of the popular revolution, as well as the realities it brought, turned them into a national minority under Slavic-Communist rule. Even with the heavy burden of "nationalists and collaborators of fascism" manifested during the "Greater Albania", it turned into a double burden of repression in the coming years.

In order to round up the model of Macedonia as a national state of the Macedonians within the Yugoslav federation, announced in the first assembly of ASNOM on July 2, 1944, it needed both "democratic" and institutional infrastructure in accordance with the progress pursued by Tito and his party headquarters as someone who also led the partisan war within the anti-fascist alliance, becoming an already important leader and in many cases filling the space between the western and eastern "blocs". Taking full control over the national liberation war in Albania, turning it into a vassal, and having managed to turn Dimitrov into a follower of his in relation to Stalin, Tito hastened Serbia, being still "troubled" in relation to the Chetniks, with the further legitimacy of ASNOM in Macedonia, to surround the circle in order to make it accept the Yugoslavia of AVNOJ "as its own national interest" from which it "could maintain its primacy even in the communist state provided that it pursued Tito's course."¹⁸⁶⁸

Serbia's "isolation" from the south, through a military cordon set up in Macedonia by Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Soviet partisan brigades, was of strategic importance on the one hand, interrupting the possibility of the German F army withdrawing to the north to use the Vardar and Morava valleys for regrouping in the Srem part for a "counter-offensive" in that part, and on the other hand, preventing any possibility for Greece aligned with the allies to get involved in the southern part in support of the Albanian, Serbian, and Bulgarian nationalist forces, which sought to connect with the allies within a new anti-communist front in these parts, of which the British were interested.¹⁸⁶⁹

Thus, since the Yugoslav partisan brigades (mainly from Montenegro and Serbia, many of them Chetniks converted to partisans after the Tito-Subašić agreement),¹⁸⁷⁰ those of Albania and Albanians of Macedonia,¹⁸⁷¹ and Kosovo as well as Bulgaria during the joint three-month

¹⁸⁶⁸ About Serbia and its role in the new Yugoslav federation led by Tito, see the interview of Vasa Cubrilovic (author of two anti-Albanian memoranda from 1937 and 1944), given to the Belgrade magazine "NIN", May, 1986, being critical of the latest memorandum of Serbian Academics initiated by Dobrica Cosic, whereupon he emphasized that Tito's Yugoslavia was in the interest of the Serbian people, that it, even in ideological circumstances, was in the Serbian interests, and that the demolition would be to detrimental to the Serbian people, as it loses the strongest geopolitical and geostrategic framework to being a regional factor.

¹⁸⁶⁹ See Dedijer, Vladimir: "Novi prijelozi za biografiku Josipa Borza Tita", 1986.

¹⁸⁷⁰ See: Pirjevac, Jože: "Tito i Drugovi", Zagreb, 2012, p. 168.

¹⁸⁷¹ In addition to the partisan brigades from Albania, the 8th Presheva Brigade and the 12th Bujanovac Partisan Brigade from the Kumanovo sector also participated. In the Kumanova Division with the 18th Brigade, the 2nd and 3rd Kosovar Brigades also operated in the Presheva region. Within the 48th Division of the "National Liberation Army of Macedonia" was part of the Albanian 4th Brigade, formed on August 2, 1944. The brigade commander was Nafi Sulejmani, and Qemal Agolli, political commissar. Taip Taip was the head of "OZN" in the Brigade. The Albanian 4th Brigade took over Struga on November 8, leaving 35 dead. This brigade took part in the fighting for Kërçova, where it faced the forces of Balli Kombëtar

offensive assisted by the Red Army to win the battle against “Albanian nationalist forces” in Kosovo and Western Macedonia, in which case an unprecedented terror was exercised against the Albanian population, and after having installed a powerful military infrastructure, on 28 and 30 December 1944 in Skopje, an extraordinary session of ASNOM was held in Skopje attended by Tito’s close associate Eduard Kardelj, Dimitar Vlahov, Lazar Koliševski, and a Bulgarian representative, General Dobri Trepsev. At this meeting, the Yugoslav leaders staged a military demonstration against the further organization of the infrastructure for the establishment of “popular power” at all levels by local national liberation councils that were to take power “from the ground up”. Kardelj’s speech shows that the “decisive phase of the anti-fascist war that was to end with an inevitable victory of the joint anti-fascist front” had to determine the character of the “future popular power”, provided that settling of accounts with nationalist forces, quislings and other servants of fascism takes place”.¹⁸⁷²

Kardelj stressed that “the mutual friendship between the Yugoslav, Albanian, and Bulgarian partisans, aided by the Soviet Red Army, was decisive for the new social and political order that would emerge.”¹⁸⁷³

The next ASNOM assembly, which began the implementation of communist rule in the new Yugoslavia according to the concept of AVNOJ, as a federal republic, was held in Skopje from April 14-16, 1945. The decision to establish it was made there. The Provisional Government of the Republic of Macedonia, chaired by Lazar Koliševski,¹⁸⁷⁴ a Tito associate from the constellation of Macedonian intellectuals associated with Belgrade. On this occasion, ASNOM turned into the People’s Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

MACEDONIA IN THE YUGOSLAV FEDERATION – THE MAIN BENEFICIARY

It may be said that for the Republic of Macedonia, more than for other federal units, Tito’s Yugoslavia was useful and necessary being its main beneficiary from its establishment to its dissolution. Within it, a contested national identity, through political factors, an appropriate identification platform had been created with that of statehood, followed by a comprehensive development among the most powerful in the country in terms of culture, education and economy.

Although in the first Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, approved on December 31, 1946, in accordance with the theory of “popular democracy” viewed from a class point of

(the National Front). This brigade, after taking part in all the fighting against the Albanian nationalist forces in Western Macedonia, in January 1945, named the Seventh Assault Brigade, was sent to the Srem front, while Western Macedonia remained under the supervision of the Chetnik brigades, which, in the name of settling accounts with “collaborators of the enemy, fascists, and cooperators continued to terrorize the nationalists”, exercising terror on the Albanian population.

¹⁸⁷² Pirjevac, Jože: “*Tito i drugovi*”, Zagreb, 2012, pp. 386-390.

¹⁸⁷³ Idem, and Petranović, Brankov: “*Tito i Staljin 1944-1946*”, Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis, I, XXIII (i,2), 1988.

¹⁸⁷⁴ *Lazar Koliševski*, born in Bitola (Manastir) in 1928, as a child, he moved with his family to Kagujevac, Serbia, where he completed high school. In Kragujevac and later Belgrade he became involved in communist activity. In 1935 he was elected a member of the YCP of the Kragujevac district. While in 1941, the delegate to the Fifth Conference of the Party, he was elected to the Central Committee of the YCP as a delegate of Serbia. After the capitulation of Yugoslavia, he was sent on partisan duties to the Bulgarian-occupied Macedonia, where he was imprisoned and sentenced to be shot, but later sentence to life imprisonment. He remained in Bulgarian prisons until September 1944. He was released after the capitulation of fascist Bulgaria. During his imprisonment, Tito used him for the needs of the Yugoslav Communist Party, appointing him secretary of the YCP Provincial Committee for Macedonia. As a prisoner he was elected a delegate in the assembly of AVNOJ in Jajce on November 29, 1943 and in the presidency of the Assembly of ASNOM on August 2, 1944! In the 1950s, Tito returned him to Belgrade as Macedonia’s representative in the highest party and state positions.

view, the people appeared as the bearer of sovereignty,¹⁸⁷⁵ the definition of a “Macedonian nation-state” was formally avoided, as stated in the 1944 ASNOM documents (statement and manifesto),¹⁸⁷⁶ Macedonia, in fact, will be experienced but also understood as a state of the Macedonian people. In addition to defining the people as a class category, the political interpretation included, as “working” all citizens with their rights, there was cultural identity (Macedonian language - official language), education in Macedonian, creativity, science and symbols that gave Macedonia the character of a national state, while providing the Macedonians with a nation-state epithet.

From a constitutional point of view, the class relations between the working people as the bearers of state sovereignty, in this case the Macedonians, as well as minorities (Albanians and others), despite party propaganda and ideological slogans used during the war “about full national equality” and so on, fabricated by “brotherhood” agreements between Yugoslav and Albanian communists always under Tito’s dictate, at least in the first two decades of the Macedonian state, reflect the factual situation of Albanians as a minority, in which case, “equality” was subject to ideological criteria, that is, the “national” (use of language, education, information and others) to be subject to information - at the level of translations, or in the service of the spirit of “Yugoslav patriotism”, which was wrinkled or, in some cases, excluded cultivation of basic national values from tradition and history.

This discourse (its change) is related to two political developments of the time:

- that of almost fraternal relations between Yugoslav and Albanian communists in accordance with Tito’s wartime agreements with Enver Hoxha based on fanatical ideological criteria continuing until 1949 when the Informbureau Resolution was passed, with the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Communist “family” led by Stalin and,
- - that from 1949 to 1963, when the spirit of proletarian internationalism and what characterized the Yugoslav-Albanian political and state relations were almost entirely left to Serbian unitarism, to return to the well-known anti-Albanian formulas in the name of ideology, resettling accounts with their culture, history and ethnicity, turning to the well-known anti-Albanian methods of the Versailles Yugoslavia: colonization and displacement.

However, relations between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia in the first period 1944-1949, that is, that of fraternal cooperation between Yugoslav communists and Albanians settled during the war, had not been as inconsistent and discriminatory as they will be later. Class criteria for all meant a stage of “social and political emancipation”, which meant “positive turns” in education, upbringing, employment, in which case the “new society” and the “new man” had to break some templates from past: gender and religious equality. Gender equality required the liberation of women from religious norms (removal of the veil) as well as the legal prohibition of marriage with many women allowed by Sharia. The new education also meant equal education for children (especially women) as well as their involvement in social and political life, even being represented in government bodies and in the administration.

¹⁸⁷⁵ Concerning the class aspect of the sovereignty of the people and its connection with the notion of nation and nationality, which will appear in the constitution of 1974, as basis of the principle of self-determination of peoples until secession, see: Kardelj, Eduard: *“Lidhja e Komunistëve të Jugosllavisë”*, Prishtinë, 1980.

¹⁸⁷⁶ See: Димитрова, Евгени: “АСНОМ“, документи, Скопје, 1996.

Installing popular power, as the communist government was called, undertook these actions, and it can be said that the years 1945-1949, in addition to the campaign of “settling accounts with reactionary forces” (such were considered patriotic forces fighting against the return of Slavic-Communist power), in which on behalf of the “new classless society” an anti-national campaign of large size took place, the “emancipatory actions” were reflected with the beginning of primary schools in the Albanian language, with the beginning of information in the Albanian language (although translated from Serbo-Croatian), as well as the involvement of certain Albanian cadres in the administration, police, and army and in the political representation of the country.

In this respect, the most important factor was education, related to the opening of Albanian schools. This was in fact the “knot” of social and political faith and trust with the new popular government in accordance with the promises made during the war to the Albanians to take part in a common anti-fascist front. In this matter, the Albanian communists will be consistent demanding from the Yugoslav communists that they keep their word, since education and emancipation of Albanians in Macedonia and Kosovo, even of an ideological nature, was of general interest as something that distinguished the “new” from the “old”- from the oppressive Yugoslav past. In addition to the “emancipator” aspect of the ideological-class concepts of the Soviet model of “equality”, the elementary fulfillment of the right to education in the mother tongue also prevented the “reaction” to organize a “popular uprising” over this dominant factor that could be supported by ever-acting “imperialist forces” from abroad.

In accordance with these attitudes, the Government of Macedonia adopted a decision to open primary schools with instruction in four languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbo-Croatian. Thus, in Skopje, on December 1, 1944, the first Albanian school “Liria”¹⁸⁷⁷ was opened, although the education room near the city did not want to give permission for the opening of the Albanian school in this city on the grounds that there were “no Albanians in Skopje, but only Turkish, so Albanian schools could not be opened, but only Turkish ones”.¹⁸⁷⁸

Despite these administrative difficulties and obstacles, that even when permits were granted for Albanian schools by stipulating that, “Muslim boys may enroll in the Albanian school, while girls only in the Turkish one”,¹⁸⁷⁹ perfidious anti-Albanianism was emphasized, in the school year 1944/45, a total of 365 students were registered in this school, distributed in six classes.¹⁸⁸⁰

Although there were many difficulties, such as those that arose in Skopje during the 1944/45 school year, 3,975 Albanian students were involved in Albanian language classes in 50 primary schools out of 971 in Macedonia, employing a total of 104 Albanian teachers out of a total of 85,100 in the whole country, or 4%.¹⁸⁸¹

In the following year, the number of Albanian-language schools in Macedonia expanded to 157 from 905 in Macedonian, while the number of students reached 12,359.

But an “overflow” of Albanian schools in the coming years was prevented by the “pretexts” of “hostile” activities of Albanian teachers, involved in the activities of the Albanian National Democratic Organization, many of whom were arrested and convicted.¹⁸⁸²

¹⁸⁷⁷ The first teachers of the “Liria” school in Skopje were Azem Marana and Hasan Bislimi. See: Lita, Qerim: “*KQ i NDSH-së dhe Azem Marana*”, Shkup, 2011, pp. 213-233.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Lita, Qerim: “*Territoret Lindore shqiptare 1912-1960*”, Shkup, 2016, p. 149.

¹⁸⁷⁹ Idem, doc. cit.: ДАРМ (Државни Архив Републике Македоније) – 1.1101.6.12/523-578.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Idem.

¹⁸⁸¹ Idem, p. 150.

¹⁸⁸² Idem.

In addition to punishing teachers in the political process against NDSH, which was reflected in curbing the opening of Albanian schools under the pretext of “lack of teachers”, four-year education in the Albanian language in Macedonia suffered another heavy blow from the Macedonian government, by a decision of the Ministry of Education issued in August 1946, which stated: “The curricula for minority schools from last year show that in the history and geography subjects of those schools, the history and geography of Yugoslavia will be taught with the history and geography of the peoples to which the minorities belong. This should be improved in such a way that only the history and geography of Yugoslavia will be taught in minority schools, as well as in Macedonian schools.”¹⁸⁸³

In addition to education in the Albanian language with the opening of primary schools in Macedonia from the school year 1944/45, in the framework of class emancipation, the Albanian culture in Macedonia was included, as a factor of the promised equality during the anti-fascist war. In August 1945, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPM issued an order requesting that within the organizations of the Front cultural-educational councils are established extending cultural-educational sections of minorities.¹⁸⁸⁴

Pursuant to this party decree, in the middle of December 1945, within the Popular Front, an “*Albanian Cultural-Educational Commission*” is formed¹⁸⁸⁵ of five separate branches: Branch for Oral Agitation, Branch for Press and Propaganda, Branch of Culture and Education, Lecture Branch. and Technical-Organizational Branch.¹⁸⁸⁶

According to the data of the time, the work of the “Albanian Cultural-Educational Commission” had been concentrated and very successful, because within a short time its branches had spread to all areas inhabited by Albanians, especially those of important in terms of cultural tradition (Dibra, Tetova, Gostivar), in which case, in addition to projects for research and collection of folklore heritage, the organization of cultural events in all Albanian territories and sports of the Albanian youth had begun.¹⁸⁸⁷

Within the cultural activities, the press in the Albanian language was of special importance. On the leadership directives, the first newspaper in the Albanian language “*Flaka e Vllazërimit*” was founded. This newspaper, which began to be published once a month, in the form of an information bulletin, mostly with translated information, however, brought together intellectuals and creators who would soon publish important literary works, followed by an overall fund of Albanian literature.

Therefore, it can be rightly said that the Albanian culture in Macedonia, despite the class criteria and ideological schemes, despite the difficulties it faced when laying its foundations, thanks to the great work done by the Albanian Cultural-Educational Commission during the first three years, more or less, it remained on the rails of spiritual identity.

¹⁸⁸³ Lita, Qerim: “*Territoret Lindore shqiptare 1920-1960*”, Shkup, 2016, doc.: ДАРМ.1.170.13.53/345-350.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Idem, doc.: ДАРМ.1.427. 1. 65/281-285.

¹⁸⁸⁵ *The Albanian Cultural-Educational Commission* was established in December 1945 on the initiative of the then intellectuals: Pjetro Janura, Lutfi Rusi, Kamber Xharia, Mahmut Dumani, Azem Marana, Osman Miftari, Murteza Peza, Jonuz Balla, Ali Shehu, and others. The Albanian agit-prop for all of Macedonia, as it was called, had set its tasks, among which were: publishing brochures and books in the Albanian language, opening as many alphabetical courses as possible, collecting material for Albanian folklore and others.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Idem, p. 154, dok: ДАРМ.Ф. Народен Фронт. К. 4. Док. 61/85/87.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Within the numerous activities of the Skopje (Shkup) branch of the Albanian Cultural-Educational Commission, the establishment of the Albanian Youth Sports Association “*Luboteni*” in Skopje was included, comprising of football, wrestling, skiing, swimming, and others. The secretary of the society was Azem Marana.

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The second development, from 1949-1963, i.e. from the breakdown of Tito's political relations with Stalin and the cessation of full cooperation between Yugoslavia and Albania, as well as the emergence of the iron border between the Albanians on both sides of the border, had a negative impact on Albanians in Macedonia, as it gave rise to Belgrade's anti-Albanian policy, to influence the class and ideological concept of affirmation of national minorities, established immediately after the war thanks to ideological agreements between Tito and Enver Hoxha in the military plan (introduction of Albanian brigades in Kosovo and Macedonia in October 1944) as well as other plans, such as those for a joint Balkan union in the form of a Federation between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and other interstate projects between Belgrade and Tirana, especially for the "economic union" between the two countries, which had begun to function in the field of economy and finance where Albania was increasingly dependent on Yugoslavia.

Serbia, which annexed Kosovo at the Prizren Assembly in July 1945, turned it into an "oblast",¹⁸⁸⁸ which, together with Vojvodina as autonomy, came as a present from Tito to accept AVNOJ's Yugoslavia,¹⁸⁸⁹ and, in line with this "right", using the outbreak of "counter-revolution in Kosovo" in November 1944 (an abomination to the Albanian national resistance against the Slavic-communist reconquest of Kosovo by Yugoslav and Albanian partisans), had launched a fierce campaign against the Albanian ethnic and cultural identity in Kosovo, was not satisfied with the "portion" of the cultural and educational rights of Albanians in Macedonia, especially with the cultural activity of the Albanian Cultural-Educational Commission, which even within the class concept of equality it returned to the roots of identity. This, among other things set "double standards" for the treatment of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia, being advanced in Macedonia, and narrowed down in Serbia fighting them under various pretexts, many of them as recipes of the October 1944 Čubrilović Elaborate, with the anti-fascist war being used to settle accounts with the "minorities" (primarily with the German "quislings" in Vojvodina, the "volkdeutcher", but also with the Hungarians and Albanians "as collaborators of fascist Germany").¹⁸⁹⁰

Although in Belgrade there will be silent reactions about "certain excesses" in Skopje in relation to the "national rights of Albanians" to the detriment of "brotherhood-unity", with "negative consequences in Kosovo",¹⁸⁹¹ however, as for the good relations between Belgrade and Tirana, Tito would have none of the Serbian "recipes" for Kosovo of which he was aware,¹⁸⁹² to extend to Macedonia. Not because Tirana would react to this, as it did not happen for Kosovo, but because he knew that the cultural and social "well-being" of Albanians in Macedonia could have an impact on Albania, bringing it even closer to Yugoslavia and merging into it, as predicted.¹⁸⁹³

¹⁸⁸⁸ Buxhovi, Jusuf: *"Kosova" IV*, Prishtina, 2015, pp. 351-355.

¹⁸⁸⁹ See for more Pirjevac, Jože: *"Tito i Drugovi"*, Zagreb, 2012, pp. 162-168, and Đilas, Milovan: *"Tito. Eine kritische Biographie"*, Molden, Wien, 1980, and *"Kako je stvarana Titova karizma"*, Slobodna Dalmacija, 22.10.1989.

¹⁸⁹⁰ On Čubrilović's Memorandum of October 1944, see Buxhovi, Jusuf: *"Kosova" IV*, Prishtinë, 2015, pp. 348-351.

¹⁸⁹¹ See: Đaković, Spasoje: *"Knjiga o Kosovu"*, Prishtinë, 1982.

¹⁸⁹² Đilas, Milovan: *"Tito. Eine Kritische Biographie"*, 1980.

¹⁸⁹³ See: Horvat, Branko: *"Kosovsko Pitanje"*, 1988, and Meier, Viktor: *"Jugoslaviens Erben"*, München, 2001, pp. 118-129.

In addition to this assumption, there are other factors that justify Tito's position to allow in Macedonia for the education and cultural development of Albanians a treatment it had during good relations with Enver Hoxha's Albania, which, although contradicting Belgrade's concepts to have them as related to "Turkish identity" and "oriental mentality" (especially of women) in order to create an identity disconnecting Kosovo Albanians and those of Macedonia to the extent that they seemed "different", they could be "calculated" and "coordinated" for "special situations" in the course of his often "unpredictable" political course in relation to his long-term plans of "wedges", which he used for certain political purposes between Serbs and Macedonians, between Albanians and Serbs, as well as Croats against Serbs and vice versa.¹⁸⁹⁴

MACEDONIA TURNING INTO AN EPICENTER OF THE MIGRATION OF ALBANIANS TO TURKEY

Despite the facts that Tito at that time in Macedonia reinitiated the national card for certain political purposes (the creation of a Macedonian nation, which was not recognized during the Yugoslav kingdom and the recognition of Albanian nationality, which during the Yugoslav kingdom was known only as a "Muslim" religious identity), in this respect it is quite natural that he saw in the Albanian factor the only possibility of maintaining its political balance, however, facts show that from 1949 to 1963, much of the anti-Albanian policy will be restored in Macedonia: from the Serbian hegemonic programs between the two world wars, especially reactivation of expulsion of Albanians to Turkey in the form of official state policy, as best reflected in the Tito-Kuprili Gentlemen's Agreement in 1953, although it had already begun.¹⁸⁹⁵

In contrast to the first Yugoslav-Turkish agreement of 1938, where Skopje, with the presence of the Turkish Consulate and large funds from Ankara, played the role of the main "administrative-technical" mechanism from which the mass displacement gained the green light, this time Macedonia and Skopje, as its capital, became the political-state epicenter of this process, as obtaining a visa to move to Turkey was conditioned by being declared "Turkish", which went through the procedures of conversion from "Muslim" to "Turk" legally possible only in Macedonia within a short period of time, regardless past declarations. Thus, in addition to the Albanians of Macedonia, who only needed a statement from the Islamic Community of religious affiliation "as a Muslim" to turn into "a Turk" without any difficulty, this was possible for Albanian citizens from Kosovo, Montenegro, Sandzak, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. For them, the formal presentation of a residence, even a temporary one in Macedonia, was enough for them to gain national "Turkish" affiliation within a month, with an expedited procedure!¹⁸⁹⁶

In addition to the ideological factors (breakup with Stalin and Albania) that influenced the return of anti-Albanian policy through organized state displacement to Turkey and even accelerated it, there are also geopolitical issues related to Turkey's turning into a pillar of

¹⁸⁹⁴ About Tito's "unpredictable moves" in the form of "political wedges", Milovan Djilas, a close associate of Tito during the war, and later a fierce opponent for which he was sentenced to prison, mentions also those of Macedonians with Albanians in Macedonia during the good Albania-Yugoslavia relations until 1949 as well as the "special" Serb-Macedonian political relations, which played a role in some of his known and unknown plans with Enver, Dimitrov, and even Stalin, on which he built AVNOJ Yugoslavia's strategy of keeping Yugoslavia afloat, as a model that Djilas called "temporarily successful", but without a historical perspective, as he was unable to eliminate or reconcile contradictions between Albanians and Slavs (Serbs and Macedonians), as they rely on eliminating each other and not on equality, see: Đilas, Milovan: "Tito. Eine kritische Biographie", Molden, Wien, 1980.

¹⁸⁹⁵ On the Yugoslav-Turkish convention of 1938 and the process of displacement of Albanians to Turkey, see: Buxhovi, Jusuf: "Kosova" IV, Prishtinë, 2015, pp. 228-235.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Lita, Qerim: "Territoret lindore shqiptare" ("Eastern Albanian territories"), Shkup, 2016, pp. 171-188.

NATO, and the rapprochement of Yugoslavia with Turkey after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1951 at the embassy level, a development that paved the way for Yugoslavia's further rapprochement with NATO. In this configuration of interests, the occupation of the "neutral" space between the two antagonistic blocs had to somewhat amortize the "cold war", with good relations with Turkey directly determining this role. Therefore, it was expected that in the new Balkan poker led by Tito and his political perfidiousness in relation to the world's highest conjunctures, Turkey's interests would be taken into account, where emigration in accordance with the conventions signed in 1938 between Ankara and Belgrade, emerged as a priority demand highlighted by the Turkish side. Moreover, the improvement of political and diplomatic relations between the two countries, from the beginning of 1951, was based on the mutual consent of the two countries, to connect the detached rails on the eve of World War II by "mutual actions".

Thus, the new climate of political cooperation between the two countries put into action certain segments of the services of the Yugoslav state at the federal and republican level, so that without any noise, it all started with the introduction of various "missionaries" involved in this job, where the "Islamic Religious Community" - the protector of the "Islamic identity" in Macedonia, appearing in turn as "Islamic ethnicity", which "should have been given priority over the foggy national declarations", held a key position.¹⁸⁹⁷

Proponents of the return of emigration, not coincidentally, turned to the "Islamic Religious Community" in Macedonia, because it, even during the first displacement through the Yugoslav-Turkish agreement of 1938, had been a decisive party in this process, because by agreement, the procedure permission to relocate from the Yugoslav state commission was granted only after the "Islamic Religious Community" in Skopje issued a certificate that the applicant for relocation was a "Muslim". So, the preamble of the "Islamic Community", in addition to giving the green light to the migration to Turkey, also served "as an alibi" to the Yugoslav government that the migration included only Muslim believers as part of their right to live in the country where they preserve their identity. In this regard, however, the "Islamic Religious Community" also felt good, in the service of a "sacred" mission for Muslim believers to live united in the Islamic State.

In the new circumstances, the "Islamic Religious Community" in Macedonia did not play only the role of the last preacher towards the displacement. This time, its "mission" did not end with issuing "Muslim religious identity", as provided for in the 1938 agreement, but went as far as engaging in political propaganda, in which case Muslim affiliation was equaled to Turkish national declaration. Although Muslim clerics were exempted from engaging in any legal proceedings that would formalize their involvement in this activity, they nevertheless remained an important "spiritual" part of this propaganda, although there will be Muslim clerics who not only refused to be involved in this activity, but were against it, for which they were punished by the state.¹⁸⁹⁸

¹⁸⁹⁷ See: document: ДАРМ.1.427.29.137/673-690 te Lita, Qerim: "*Territoret Lindore shqiptare 1920-1960*", Shkup, 2016, p. 173.

¹⁸⁹⁸ More about the position of the Islamic Community regarding the displacement and the activity of some Muslim clerics in Macedonia against the displacement of Albanians to Turkey and the lawsuits against them, see Lita Qerim: "*Territoret Lindore Shqiptare 1912-1960*", Shkup, 2016, pp. 171-179, and in "*Problemi shqiptar në RP (S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", collected documents, Book Two (The Process of Displacement), Shkup, 2018.

So, under the new agreement between the two states that still remained “internal” (until 1958), as a precondition for gaining the right to relocate, the Turkish national declaration appeared, a statement that fell legally within the competence of the state (Commission for Displacement at the federal level). But in order to get to the official form, it needed a suitable social and political climate, first and foremost that of religious missionary work, in which case the “right” to “free” declaration as a Turk was linked to Muslim “religious identity”, which the “Islamic Religious Community” repeatedly emphasized accusing “Albanian nationalism”, which had influenced Muslim believers to be nationally defined as Albanians to the detriment of the Turkish factor.¹⁸⁹⁹

Turkish officials and various Turkish missionaries were involved in the mission, but always in line with the Turks’ right to free expression in accordance with their identity, where, of course, the Islamic faith played a “decisive role”. In addition to official diplomatic visits to Albanian settlements in Macedonia, they openly propagated the “revival of the Turkish element in Macedonia”, allegedly presenting guests visiting “cousins” and relatives. They, too, were spreading open propaganda about moving to Turkey, where “good life” awaited them. But in order for this to become a reality, they themselves had to ask Macedonian officials to allow this “right” to be granted as soon as possible through organized displacement.¹⁹⁰⁰

Of course, the whole trick of exploiting the “right” to move to Turkey depended on the “Turkish” declaration, a definition that, as has already been seen, was made possible by the perfidious policy that the so-called “Muslim” declaration (for long in the Yugoslav kingdom the only possible denomination for ethnic Albanians), to be replaced by the term “Turkish national”. This “modification” was doubly important for the political realities in Macedonia, which were determined by the demographics, but also for Serbia and its relations with Kosovo and the Albanian factor in it, estimating that, in the new circumstances, a good part of Albanians in Macedonia and Kosovo would use the repression campaign as an excuse to move out to Turkey.

In addition to the opportunities for relocation, declaring as a “Turks” in Macedonia was associated with certain privileges in social, political and economic life, as it always enabled registration in Turkish-language schools, which also provided scholarships for children outside the city. Also, by being declared a “Turk” opened the doors for employment outside the “differentiating lists” and other party and police filters, which were valid for Albanians. For “Turkish” members, positions in the state administration, police and the judiciary were open. Such quickly built political careers, all of which spoke of an open anti-Albanian policy in the name of restoring “Turkish national identity” in line with the “real situation” that for Macedonian and Yugoslav officials had been prevented by “Albanian nationalism”, which had imposed Albanianism even where it was not!

¹⁸⁹⁹ Idem.

¹⁹⁰⁰ The joint propaganda strategy for the relocation to Turkey between Turkish and Yugoslav officials and diplomats began in 1951. Their main organizer was the Turkish Ambassador to Belgrade, Fuat Kyprili (Köprülü). Kyprili initiated the renewal of the 1938 convention, with “new modalities”, i.e. the “modification” of the religious category “Muslim” to “Turkish”, accepted in Macedonia and Kosovo as a national minority, which provided for the visits of Turkish diplomats and missionaries to Albanian settlements in Macedonia, where missionaries for displacement could also be recruited. This is also confirmed by a material of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the People’s Republic of Macedonia, drafted especially for the reasons of displacement, which acknowledges the role of Turkish propaganda and missionaries in Albanian settlements and the luring of citizens with “good life in Turkey”. (See: ДАРМ.1.427.60.7./116-129, in Lita, Qerim “Territoret Lindore shqiptare 1920-1960”, Shkup, 2016, p. 172.)

In order to bring “proof” of this, that is, the action by “Albanian nationalists” against the Turkish population and exercise of their rights, some politically mounted trials against Albanian teachers and activists in various cities served, in which case they were accused and convicted of “propaganda against Turkish-language schools”.¹⁹⁰¹

That the decline of education in the Albanian language and the further opening of schools in the Turkish language had already become a state program coming from the party bodies is evidenced by the attitudes of the Politburo, as it said, “regarding political, economic and organizational problems in the territories where Albanians were absolute majority of the population.” They initially invited party and district organizations to work “to reverse national-chauvinist tendencies”, focusing on education in the Albanian language “as a generator of great-Albanian ideas”, pointing the finger towards Enver Hoxha’s Albania and the Albanian “saboteurs” who entered these parts.¹⁹⁰²

On this occasion, a fact was being ignored that it was exactly the partisans of Enver Hoxha, those who three or four years before, in cooperation with the Yugoslav and Bulgarian partisans had helped “liberation” from “Greater Albania” and the Slav-Communist reoccupation, paying the price of exterminating of the Albanian nationalist elite and bringing communists to power.

As a “therapy” to eradicate the “great Albanian indoctrination”, the Politburo ordered the opening of Turkish-language schools in Western Macedonia. While the Albanian Normal School in Tetova was closed, near the Normal School in Skopje (in Macedonian) classes in Turkish and Albanian were opened.¹⁹⁰³

It further said that “measures should be taken to clean politically unsuitable and professionally weak teachers so that, step by step, we can move towards cleansing of teachers who came from Albania”, although many of them, due to lack of Albanian teachers in Macedonia, were brought from Tirana due to a Yugoslav-Albanian agreement of 1945 to help spread Albanian education in Macedonia.¹⁹⁰⁴

Similar allegations were made by some Albanian intellectuals and politicians who fought for the Albanian school and Albanian education, although many of them belonged to the generation of partisan units from the ranks of Albanians in Macedonia who had joined the anti-fascist front led by Yugoslav and Albanian communists.¹⁹⁰⁵

Ideological differentiations, dismissals and lawsuits against those who demanded from the party bodies to stop the policy of converting “Muslim” Albanians to “Turks” were also common, an issue that, although deliberately ignored, included the highest Republican and federal party structures as well as those of the executive branch, so that the political positions were in line with the administrative ones for the displacement to continue as planned.

¹⁹⁰¹ Idem.

¹⁹⁰² ДАРМ.1.427.27.59/331-340.

¹⁹⁰³ Idem.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Idem.

¹⁹⁰⁵ The size of the campaign against Albanian intellectuals and teachers who refused to work to the detriment of the Albanian school and opposed the opening of violent schools in the Turkish language in which some Albanian children without any knowledge of the Turkish language were forced to attend, is best seen in the trial against renowned intellectual Murtena Bajraktari from Gostivar. In the trial staged in 1953, he stated that the main reason he was being prosecuted and accused of being “enemy of the people” is that he did not consent to opening Turkish schools in Tetova and Gostivar, because it was an anti-Albanian project that aimed at their conversion into Turks as a step towards the disappearance of Albanianism. Bajraktari had stated that he was not anti-Turkish, as he was accused, but an Albanian patriot who did not accept the Turkification of Albanians according to anti-Albanian programs.(See: ДАРМ.1.427.27.58/311-340, in Lita, Qerim: *“Territoret Lindore shqiptare 1912-1960”*, Shkup, 2016, p. 178.)

Among the state measures that should have given legitimacy to the “Turkish” factor to create a formal platform for migration, was the census, which would provide “answers” to the policies pursued by the state, by of which the number of Albanians, shown in the 1948 census, would be significantly reduced, which could take place with an increase of the number of Turks, thus providing “justifications” for this “change”, as already politically coordinated by the positions of party and state forums.

Thus, in the circumstances of a multifaceted state repression against education, culture and all that was Albanian in the class and ideological sense in Macedonia, established according to internationalist agreements between Yugoslav and Albanian communists in the period 1944-1949, in 1953, there came a second census.

The results of the census of 1953, after two years of all the necessary precautions at all the state levels and areas: in education (differentiation of Albanian teachers with the nationalist past and the opening of Turkish schools, even without students or with very few of them), then in culture (with the shrinking of cultural activity placing it within the framework of brotherhood-unity, i.e. fading or loss of national identity) and in other areas of discrimination against Albanians and stimulation of Turks, came out in line with party and state predictions regarding ethnic relations between Albanians and Turks, which were called “realistic”.

They were called “realistic” as the number of Albanians, compared to the 1948 census, resulted to minus 34,865 inhabitants (from 197,389 to 162,254), while that of Turks increased by over 100%, or 107,998 inhabitants (from 95,000 as it was in 1948 to 203,000 in 1953)!

This framed statistic, similar to a demographic term, which was possible in the circumstances of such a plot of the highest state levels and their operating mechanisms, which did not go unnoticed even by objective Macedonian researchers,¹⁹⁰⁶ and those of Prishtina too,¹⁹⁰⁷ classified the Turks as second in rank (after Macedonians with 860,000 inhabitants), while the Albanians to the third place, which consequently changed the political and social discourse in general. Because ranking below the Turks practically required “corrections” in education, culture, employment, representation, in which case the educational and cultural institutions in the Turkish language (schools, libraries, theaters, etc.) had to be subject to this “reality”, that is, narrowing or closing down of the Albanian ones and opening them in the Turkish language instead. Violent statistics had to make policy realistic in Macedonia, the main purpose of which was to allow the Turkish minority to move to Turkey, while closing the mouths of Albanians with the condemnation of “violators” and “perpetrators”, the same as Čubrilović had demanded in his last Elaborate of October 1944.

Of course, the statistical “tremor” in Macedonia had to be followed by party and political state reasoning, so that everything seemed “natural”, as “a return to a denied normality”, created by the presence of Greater Albania during the years 1941-1944 and as a result of “great-Albanian” indoctrination that had continued “even from 1944-1951”, when its “source” (they said, “Enver Hoxha’s propaganda” and “its interference in Macedonia’s internal affairs”) was cut off, and on the other hand the possibility of free declaration, created by the new

¹⁹⁰⁶ Dr. Jovan Trifunovski, in his book: “Албанско Становништво у Социјалистичкој Републици Македонији” (“*The Albanian population in the Republic of Macedonia*”), Beograd 1988, talking about the 1953 census, says, among other things, that there is evidence that Albanians are registered as Turks. Such examples have appeared in some settlements of Skopje, Kumanova, Manastir, Prilep, Gostivar, and Resnja, and in certain ton neighborhoods.

¹⁹⁰⁷ On unitary and nationalist methods of declaring Albanians as Turks, especially in the cities of Western Macedonia and Kosovo, see Hoxha, Hajredin: “*Afirmimi i kombësisë shqiptare në Jugosllavi*”, Prishtinë, 1983, p. 74.

circumstances (good Yugoslav-Turkish relations), where “religious identity” as “religious fanaticism” also appears as a determining factor against the “national violence” with which “Albanian nationalism” was already identified.¹⁹⁰⁸

Alongside the “Enver Hoxha” factor and “indoctrination by him”, which emerged as a party analysis of the highest levels, the “free declaration” factor, “alibi” of the religious factor, with Islam, as it was said, “was related to centuries-old tradition of the Turkish population”, which according to party ideologues, was understandable as “the right to live in accordance with religious and ethnic traditions”, ruined in the new circumstances of the socialist society in Macedonia, but which Turkey provides.¹⁹⁰⁹

The formula of “centuries-old religious tradition” and “natural connection with it” and even “as a basic human right” to which any society, always accompanied by political demagoguery, passes its civilization exam, appears as a recipe for the normalization of political and diplomatic relations of Yugoslavia and Turkey as well as the creation of the circumstances for the Turks, having not been free to declare themselves as Turks”, “confusing” it rather with being Albanian, and since the socialist society and the new system do not coincide with their mentality and traditions “of the oriental world”, to move out in accordance “with their free will”.

Regarding the creed (religion) factor, a commission of the Central Committee of the CL of Macedonia stated that “in the case of Macedonia it was an almost identical factor for a large part of the population of Western Macedonia, which did not allow it to be confused with the national factor, as had happened under the pressure of the Albanian nationalists during Greater Albania, when the Muslims had become Albanians, and as had happened during the years of the people’s power, when some of them were still treated as “Albanians”, although they spoke Turkish in their families and belong to that mentality. The opening of schools in the Turkish language, the option of free declaration (outside the pressure of the Albanian nationalists) has turned things into normalcy, i.e. free national declaration, a fact that led to the reflection of a “hidden” demographic truth.”¹⁹¹⁰

It is interesting to note on this occasion that the documents of the time of the Yugoslav UDB speak otherwise. From the secret information addressed to the highest party bodies, it appears that “such a high change in the national structure between the two registrations was not a result of a natural increase of the population, but rather by the changing declarations of the Albanians and the Torbesh.”¹⁹¹¹

According to the UDB, “this was an artificial change of national structures”, which did not come as an element of crystallization of identity, but of an immediate explosion of the religious and fanatical element in the great desire to end living amidst the Kauris and to continue in the world and the state of the same religion as their own, ”which also explained what daily politics already justified” as a natural right of the Turks to live where they feel free”.¹⁹¹²

However, new statistics, which doubled the number of Turks and reduced the number of Albanians by a third, created real opportunities for intensification of migration, which, although it began in 1951, did not take on the dimensions expected by the Yugoslavs and Turkey. This

¹⁹⁰⁸ Idem.

¹⁹⁰⁹ See: Ачковска, Виолета: “Колективизација на селото 1949-1953 године на македонство во Западна Македонија“, Скопје, 2000.

¹⁹¹⁰ Idem.

¹⁹¹¹ ДАРМ.1.427.72.1/1-67.

¹⁹¹² Idem.

dissatisfaction was especially noticeable among Macedonian officials and politicians, who, since 1951, when the “green light” was given to the displacement and when the conversion of Muslims to Turks began as the main precondition for the right to move to Turkey, on several occasions they had considered the situation, in which case there had been a stalemate on the part of the Albanian nationalists, “who hindered this process” and, on the negligence of some government bodies, that the national declaration should be stimulated through educational measures (meaning a greater inclusion of the number of Turkish-language students). In order to remove obstacles so that “citizens can freely declare their national affiliation and religious identity as part of it, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CL of Macedonia requested from the government (Executive Council) that, after the census and the “changing of the demographic situation” an official commission be established to visit all the municipalities of Macedonia where the non-Macedonian population will be helped to decide its own fate.

The establishment of party commissions, their reviews and conclusions (tasks of state bodies) were also perfidious. Because, they started with “ascertaining the situation” and “worrying” about it, ending “with the distribution” of tasks to change it, ostensibly for the better (the free will of the population was constantly mentioned), but it was all about the displacement program and its fulfillment.

On the occasion, the Political Bureau Commission, always relying on statistical data from 1951-1953, where the number of those who had moved for three years barely exceeded two thousand people, assessed the situation as “unsatisfactory”,¹⁹¹³ demanding that the entire administrative procedure be reviewed (numerous documents until the official request of the state commission was submitted), so that it does not turn into difficulties, but rather simplified.

Despite dissatisfaction with the “stagnation” in the general plan, the party commission assessed the increase of requests for relocation to Eastern and Central Macedonia (in the municipalities of Veles, Prilep, Bitola and the center of Skopje). It was assessed that in these parts, “although national feelings are not crystallized, the will to move out is great, up to 90%, of those who have declared themselves Turks want to move, because in these parts Muslims are left free to determine themselves on both national affiliation and for relocation decisions”.¹⁹¹⁴

However, from 1954 to 1959, with the demographic situation of the last census changing greatly in favor of the Turkish nationality, ranking second out of the total number of the population in Macedonia, exceeding that of Albanian nationality ranking third, the intensified party and state campaign began and the displacement was multiplied as compared to the beginning. Thus, in 1954, 17,369 people moved to Turkey. In 1955, this increase doubled. It reached 38,045 people. In 1956 it went up to 28,816. In 1957, 27,432 people moved. While in 1958 23,626 moved out. By March 15, 1959, 6,362 people would have moved out.¹⁹¹⁵

So, according to official Yugoslav figures, 143,800 citizens moved out to Turkey in eight years, or 11% of Macedonia’s total population, officially all of Turkish nationality, in fact most of them Albanians, who had changed their national affiliation of migration cause.

The drastic decline in the number of requests for relocation and its stagnation in May 1959 occurred because the Turkish side began asking for the birth certificates of the relocation applicants showing ethnic affiliation based on the 1941 registers and back.

¹⁹¹³ Idem.

¹⁹¹⁴ ДАРМ.1.472.60.7/116-129.

¹⁹¹⁵ ДАРМ.1.427.128.5-23-39, in Lita, Qerim: “Territoret Lindore shqiptare 1920-1960”, Shkup, 2016, p. 199.

The request of the Turkish side to determine the nationality in accordance with authentic documents of the registers and not with those converted on religious grounds (Muslim-Turkish), caused concern to the Macedonian state bodies, especially when the municipal courts in Macedonia and the relevant secretariats, on a federal directive, interrupted the change of national identity in the form of a campaign, as was being done,¹⁹¹⁶ because even a most superficial international review on the issue, which was being criticized by many from abroad, highlighted the organized hand of the state in it, opening the suspicion of an ethnocide. This would put Tito in great trouble, especially when on his way of approaching the “third world” countries within the framework of the non-aligned movement of which he would become a world leader.

Macedonian historiography, as well as Albanian historiography, apart from its journalistic description, has not paid due attention to the displacement of the fifties and to the factors that encouraged and supported it to reach the level of about 150 thousand displaced persons, especially the latter, presenting it as an “insert” of anti-Albanian policy outside the geopolitical contexts and important regional movements.

However, on the one hand, it was interrupted by the pressure of the international factor in various international forums, various associations, as well as by the Albanian state that began to raise their voices and protest the occurrence of a state ethnocide against Albanians, which forced Turkey to end it too, having in mind its relations with the Albanian state, but also with the many Albanians in Turkey originating from Albanian lands (Kosovo and Macedonia), who increasingly protested to the Turkish state that by this action it was helping Serbian anti-Albanian policy.

In addition to external factors that influenced the cessation of migration to Turkey, which require a special deep and comprehensive analysis, it could be said that it was also influenced by the internal political movements in Yugoslavia itself, because the displacement of Albanians to Turkey ruined the political balance in the Yugoslav federation in favor of Serbian unitarism. Meanwhile, it also disrupted internal relations with Albanians, especially those in Kosovo, who were still dissatisfied with their status under Serbia. It also upset relations with Albania, to which Tito paid special attention, so as not to escalate, especially after Brezhnev’s arrival at the helm of the USSR, as this could bring Enver back to Moscow, implying one more possibility for the Serbian unitary tendencies instead of gaining ground for internal movements against Tito and his course at the internal level (socialist self-government) and external (the movement of non-alignment as a new world placement between antagonistic blocs), to which Moscow had long considered and waited for the right moment to take action.

Although the chapter on the migration to Turkey of 1951-1959 was concluded without being given the epithet of an ethnocide, it nevertheless showed that political developments in Macedonia as well as the Albanian issue in it remained a vortex of regional plexuses of various geopolitical and geostrategic factors under Tito’s management.

ASSIMILATION OF ORTHODOX ALBANIANS IN MACEDONIA

¹⁹¹⁶ Idem.

The ban on the organized movement of Albanians to Turkey from mid-1959 (although in various forms it continued until 1961) did not stop the official Macedonian and Yugoslav actions to change Macedonia's demographic map as the number of Macedonians increased by two different methods. One was bringing in Slav-Macedonian population known as "Aegeans" from Greece. These were political refugees who, during the civil war in Greece (1946-1949), emigrated to Eastern European countries (USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania and others). And, secondly, through the assimilation of Albanians of the Orthodox faith in Macedonia and partly Serbs through the Orthodox religious affiliation.

The first action, the "withdrawal" of Slav-Macedonians from the Aegean part of Greece to Yugoslavia, was a project initiated in the 1950s after the end of the civil war in Greece, when some political refugees were dispersed in eastern countries being declared as "Slav-Macedonian". They began settling in Macedonia in the early 1960s and had continued so for a decade.¹⁹¹⁷ Most of them, being treated as a "repatriated population", were sent to the Albanian areas in Macedonia (mostly in Polog), in order to balance the structure of the population in favor of the Macedonian one, which was a minority in these parts. The largest number of the "Aegeans" was located in parts of Dibra, Gostivar, and up to Tetova. A good part of them also settled in the district of Manastir, in the properties of Albanians who moved to Turkey, which had been bought by the state.

This privileged population with property, employment, education and the rest, at the same time became an open discriminatory factor for Albanians, because a good part of them were recruited to the police service, from where, in various forms, they began using violence and pressure on Albanians depriving them even of the few civil rights they had, a practice that came to light years later by some critical analyses of the highest Yugoslav party bodies by the late 1960s known as "deformations" against the Albanian population.¹⁹¹⁸

The cessation of the migration of Albanians to Turkey and the bringing in of the "Aegeans", although it did not bring the expected results in accordance with the predictions to have the Albanian ethnic factor reduced as much as possible, would not discourage Skopje from continuing the long-standing policy of using religious (Orthodox) affiliation to assimilate Christian Albanians into Macedonian.

Indeed, the use of the recipe of exploiting religious affiliation (orthodoxy) for hegemonic political purposes was neither new nor unknown to Skopje. Belgrade had used it since the time of the occupation of Albanian lands during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) as well as those it reoccupied after the First World War in 1918. Relying on hegemonic projects (Garašanin's "Načertanije" of 1844) and others afterwards, Belgrade put into operation the entire ecclesiastical infrastructure (spiritual inspiration of Serbian hegemony) and the "scientific" - historians from the Serbian Academy of Sciences, especially those coming from the "Slavic schools" of Vienna (Gopčević, V. Karadžić, Jastrebov, and others) as well as those from Paris (J. Cvijić, S. Novaković, and others) to use the factor of orthodoxy for political purposes political: on the one hand to turn it into a national consciousness according to the well-known formula of Hellenism (the one who is Greek is Orthodox, and the one who is Orthodox is Greek), and on the other hand, to assimilate the Albanians of the Orthodox faith by introducing them to their own construction projects, as was done by the first uprising

¹⁹¹⁷ According to an analysis entitled "The current issue regarding the settlement of compatriots from the Aegean Macedonian part", drafted in December 1974 by the Council for Immigration Affairs at the Executive Council of the SR of Macedonia, it is stated that until 1968, from Eastern Europe (USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, etc.), a total of 10,182 families with 34,915 members were brought and settled in Macedonia. From 1968 to 1974, there were 932 families with 3,224 members. The Macedonian government had decided that this process would remain open until 1974, and within this time another 4,000 families with about 21 thousand members were brought and settled in Macedonia, which brings the total number to 55 thousand people located in Macedonia. See: Док. ДАРМ.1.159.к.327, Анализа на Советот за емиграционото прашања, Скопје, X. 1974 in "Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974", Shkup, 2018, Book One, p. 40.

¹⁹¹⁸ See document from the Archive of Slovenia (Arhiv Slovenije) F. 1589 from the YCC meeting, Beograd, 20. 01. 1969, in Lita, Qerim: "Territoret lindore shqiptare 1912-1960", Shkup, 2016, p. 170).

of 1804 and the second of 1815 onwards. This strategy was used particularly in Kosovo and Macedonia following their occupation in 1912 and reoccupation in 1918. Initially the Serbian kingdom, in the years 1912-1915 and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, in the years 1919-1926 and, later, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1926-1941) will make sure that the Albanian population of the Orthodox faith in the so-called “Old Serbia” (as designed by S. Gopčević, J. Cvijić, Hadzivasilević, and others, as “medieval Serbian spiritual center, devastated by violent Islamization of Serbs” and their conversion “to Arnauts”¹⁹¹⁹ to “re-Serbianize” through state methods by even considering this as missionaryism for the benefit of Western civilization”.¹⁹²⁰

Of course, in this process, in the years 1912-1941, the Albanians of the Orthodox faith, connected with the Serbian Orthodox Church, had to be included first, then the Vlachs separated from their nativity in the Albanian vilayets (Western Macedonia and Thrace) and Slav-Macedonians, although the well-known ethnographer Cvijić saw them as blurred by a lack of national consciousness and lack of ethnic identity, although linguistically appearing Bulgarian.¹⁹²¹

For Gopčević, “missionaryism” for the inclusion of the entire Orthodox population in Kosovo, Macedonia among the Serbian people, especially of the “Arnautas” Albanians,¹⁹²² and “Bulgarianized” Serbs, a strategic state and political concept also emerged, as it restored “European Christian civilization” to a historic space where it had been violently devastated by Ottoman invasions.¹⁹²³

The authors of this “school” came mainly from the “Slavic circle” of Vienna, which dealt with the creation of a political platform for the new Slavic states of the South (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria) to meet the “Western sphere” rather than the Russian one, as supported by Cvijić’s “platform” that the “Slavs of Macedonia” (as a geographical and by no means political concept as will happen with its rise in the early twentieth century), will support any military force that replaces the Ottoman one. “If the Bulgarians come, they will declare themselves - Bulgarians. If Serbian soldiers come - they will declare themselves Serbs... It is important that they have the Orthodox Church as a shield ... The national declaration for them is a matter of power...”¹⁹²⁴

This hegemonic platform, in the vilayets of Kosova and Manastir, being at the epicenter of the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, gained special weight in relation to the majority Albanians of these areas and the minority Vlachs, because there, by the conversion of religious affiliation into a national one, Albanians and Vlachs were assimilated and turned into Serbs. In order for this process to take final shape, state programs through education (education in the Serbian language) and cultural “integrations” into Serbian society were of help.

For Belgrade, the method of converting the religious factor into a national identity had given the best test in the establishment of the Greek state, whereas most of the Orthodox Albanians from Epirus and the Arvanites from Morea had served this idea, responding to

¹⁹¹⁹ Хађивасилевил, Јован: “*Стара Србија и Македонија*“, Београд, 1939.

¹⁹²⁰ Idem.

¹⁹²¹ Цвијич, Јован: “*Основе за географију, геологију Македоније и Старе Србије*“, Београд, 1911-

¹⁹²² According to Gopcevic and others, the term “Arnauts” meant Serbs, who, during the Ottoman Empire, had been forced to accept Islam and as such were “Albanianized”! Therefore, this “Arnautashe” population was Slavic, and as such, had to prove the “medieval Serbian presence in Kosovo” (called Old Serbia), which “legitimizes” the Serbian historical right in Kosovo, despite the fact that in the twentieth century Serbs appeared as a minority in this part.

¹⁹²³ Гопћевич, Спиридон: “*Стара Србија и Македонија*“, Београд, 1890, and Хађивасилјевич, Јован: “*Арнаути – наше крви арнауташи*“, Београд, 1939.

¹⁹²⁴ Цвијич, Јован: “*О етнографији македонских словена*“, Београд, 1906.

Odessa's call for a Greek revolution to "restore ancient Greece", also led by Arvanites leading the Revolutionary Committee.¹⁹²⁵

As soon as it occupied Albanian territory, in accordance with the anti-Albanian strategy, Belgrade, in addition to the methods of genocide against Albanians of the Muslim faith (killings, displacements and demolition of their settlements), took swift measures to "protect" Albanians of the Orthodox faith, declaring them Serbs. The so-called "Bulgarianized Serbs" were also declared Serbs, namely Bulgarians belonging to the Slav-Macedonian amalgam.

Compared to the troubles that befell Belgrade coming along with the genocide and later the ethnocide against Albanians of the Muslim faith (as a majority) and the measures to be taken, the assimilation of Orthodox Albanians into Serbs went almost unnoticed because it was the Serbian Orthodox Church that cared that the whole process takes place "quietly". Thus, in Kosovo and Macedonia, a third of the Albanian Orthodox population and all Slav-Macedonians (mainly Bulgarians and Vlachs), through the church and state violence, were turned into Serbs.

This process, in relation to the Slav-Macedonians, was interrupted in August 1944, at the ASNOM assembly when AVNOJ Macedonia was established as a "state of the Macedonian nation". As for the Albanians of the Orthodox faith, this process continued. But this time, the "Serbian" affiliation was replaced by the "Macedonian" one.

The logic of the winner at arms, as J. Cvijić and the state language (declaring Macedonian the official language of the republic) as official identity, played a decisive role for the Albanians of the Orthodox faith in Macedonia (with the exception of a small number) to exploit religious belief to ensure survival but also civic privileges. So some of them turned into Macedonians, while the rest, linked to the federation and Belgrade, retained Serbian affiliation as an opportunity for double benefits: in relation to Serbia and Macedonia.

Despite these realities set by force, however, knowing that the conversion of religious affiliation into national identity may not always be successful because it is historical factors (ethnic, cultural) as well as political ones that influence their movements, the Macedonian politics, relying on the Serbian hegemony, tried to maintain, at least in "historiographical" terms, the discourse of Belgrade's "academics", to localize the well-known slogan that "historically Serbian national identity is linked to the Orthodox faith" by reformulating it to "Orthodoxy belongs to the Macedonians as well", by which it is also accepted as part of the national identity.

But in the new circumstances, in order to protect themselves from the historical responsibility of participating in a violent assimilation process, such as the registration of Orthodox Albanians as Macedonians, the Government of Macedonia, when the "fraternal relations with the Albanian communists" and Enver Hoxha broke in 1950, opened the issue of "Albanian genocide on Slavic elements", whereas some "analyses" were drafted in which Albanians were presented as "violators of Slavic territories",¹⁹²⁶ starting in "Upper Reka",

¹⁹²⁵ *Ypsilanti*, a political emigrant from Macedonia, based in Odessa, where he established the Revolutionary Committee for Greece. From there he called for liberation from Turkey. In that call, everyone was invited to establish a common Greek state. It included a call to the Orthodox Albanians to fight for the Greek state, which would be common.

¹⁹²⁶ It is about an Elaboration of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia from 1950 in which, among other things, it is stated that "The Turkish Empire has been mainly passive regarding the penetration of Albanians in Western Macedonia. This is just one of the reasons. Second, the Albanians lived in extremely difficult economic conditions and deceived the rich Slavic shepherds on the rich pastures in Korab and Sharr. The first infiltration takes place mainly through these mountains: cattle are stolen, and stalls, and so Korab and Sharr become mountains of thieves - as they were called then. That is to say - this penetration is carried out by force and terror against the Slavic population, through armed groups of 200-300 people, under the leadership of a tribal leader." (See: ДАРМ.1.427.27.268-295, Анализа на шиптарското малцинство-работено од 17.01. до 10.02.1952 година, in Lita, Qerim: "Territoret lindore shqiptare 1912-1960", Shkup, 2016, p. 166).

where the “Slavic element” in the circumstances of the great Albanian oppression, had managed to preserve its mother tongue by changing faith (acceptance of Islam)”.¹⁹²⁷

According to the “analysis” of the Macedonian communists, accepted by the government and recommended to educational groups for the writing of a “new history”, refuting the “recommendations” from 1945 that made the basis for explaining the history of Albanians in the Albanian-language primary schools in Macedonia of the texts of communist Tirana to serve the Albanians, who in all communist agreements between Tirana and Belgrade appeared as “people” reduced to a “violent” minority, without history, appearing as “perpetrators”.

Within this concept, the historical and ethnic context of Albanians rooted in antiquity, which was not only part of Western civilization, but also built their own social and political structures (from the most important empires and kingdoms of the time), and among the first to have accepted Christianity through the trunk of which, during Byzantium, the divisions between the Eastern and Western rites had passed, it had to be deprived of any connection with Christianity, especially with Orthodox Christianity, with which it had met for the most part in the Middle Ages, with some converted to Islam, but a third part continuing to preserve its pertaining. And to portray Orthodox Christianity as a “Slavic religious identity” that had been “disturbed” by the “violence of the Albanians”, some Slavic (Macedonian) Christians had accepted the Albanian language! Such were found in the settlements of Beliçica, Duf, Kiçina, Vërban, and Brodec in Reka e Epërme (Upper Reka).¹⁹²⁸

This flagrant deception of the highest party body of Macedonia and the Government of Skopje meant to obscure the truth about the great affiliation of Orthodox Christianity among the Albanians of Western Macedonia and Thrace, as part of their spiritual identity since the 4th century onwards when Christianity was formalized in Dardania and Illyricum, assimilated on the occasion of the Serbian invasions in 1912 and re-assimilated into Macedonian on the occasion of the Slavic-communist reoccupation of 1944.

This, however, cannot hide the fact that Orthodox Christianity, with the Ohri bishopric as its capital, was in these parts the spiritual identity of the Albanians, despite the ecclesiastical language (a Bulgarian-Vlach-Slavic mixture) throughout the Middle Ages to remain as such among a large part of the Albanians of these areas even during the Ottoman rule. This fact was acknowledged in a rivalry of churches for hegemonic purposes in the nineteenth century between the Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek churches for the appropriation of this population in accordance with the predatory policies of the newly created states in the European part of the Ottoman Empire (Montenegro, Serbia), Greece, and Bulgaria) whereas in order to divide Albanian lands, the Macedonian crisis leading to the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 would be artificially opened.

Leaving aside the descriptions of well-known German, French, British, and other linguists and diplomats such as J. G von Hahn, Lord Byron, Fallenmayer, Green, F. Lippich, Miss Durham, and others, and the linguistic and ethnographic studies of many of them from the

¹⁹²⁷ Idem.

¹⁹²⁸ That the inhabitants of the mentioned villages of Upper Reka were Orthodox Albanians, Serbisized during the Serbian occupation and Macedonianized in 1945, speaks the statistics of 1900, in which case in the village Okushë appear 14 Orthodox Albanian houses and 100 Muslim Albanian houses . 860 Orthodox Albanians and 180 Muslim Albanians appear in Duf of Gostivar. In Ribnica (Radika) there were 120 Orthodox Albanians and 200 Muslim Albanians. In Niçur (Upper Reka), 250 Orthodox Albanians and 220 Muslim Albanians. In Beliçicë (Upper Reka) there were 450 Orthodox Albanians. (See: Тодоровски, Гкигор-Стојановски, Александар, Ивановски, Орде: “Миграционо движење на шиптарското малцинство во Македонија“, Скопје, 1965, pp. 8-46).

beginning of the 19th century confirming the presence of the Orthodox factor among Albanians in Greece, Thrace, Macedonia and Kosovo, and even Serbia, testifying to the large presence of Albanians of the Orthodox faith in most of the vilayets of Manastir, Janina, and Kosova there are international reports sent to the Conference of Ambassadors by their commissions for the demarcation of the borders of London Albania with Greece and Serbia at that time in the period between 1913-1915 and those of the Peace Conference in Paris 1919-1920, providing proof that a large part of the population from the Albanian lands to be granted to Serbia and Greece are of the Orthodox faith. In this case, settlements are mentioned as well as their number, which later, from Belgrade and Athens, will be completely hidden, as they will be assimilated into Serbs, Greeks, or Montenegrins.

It suffices to present here only a few facts from the consul and later the Austro-Hungarian diplomat Teodor Ipen, as an adviser at the London Conference from December 1912 to August 1913. Ipen provides interesting data from international commissions that had been dealing with the research of religious and national affiliation of the population in Dukagjin, Kosovo, and especially in the part of Polog of Macedonia, at the time when these parts were being discussed (Gjakova in Dukagjin and Dibra in Polog) whether to remain within the borders of the London Albanian state, or to be granted to Serbia, which had occupied them in the name of “liberation” (as will actually happen). During the controversy with the Russian representative Petrajev, who was an ardent spokesman for the Serbian occupation of Albanian lands and demanded that under the pretext of religious affiliation (Orthodoxy) these parts be left to Serbia, because “the Orthodox there were Slavs, so Serbs, from the Middle Ages onward”, which, according to Petrajev, was also evidenced by the Serbian Orthodox monasteries: of Deçan, Peja, Deviq and others. Ipen uses the arguments that “Orthodox were also a good part of the Albanian population in Dukagjin and Dibra together with the surrounding area”, and that, “Russian lists on the Slavs there, present nothing but an Albanian autochthonous population, who spoke Albanian, a matter that could be proved, as evidenced by the relevant commissions.”¹⁹²⁹

This insinuation opens the issue of violent “Islamization” and the “preservation of Slavic identity” within the “regroupings” of the Gorani, Torbesh, and others, in the past (namely during the time of the unification of Albanian lands 1941-1944)) declared themselves “Albanians” ostensibly under the pressure of Albanian nationalists during the time of “fascist Albania”.¹⁹³⁰

Of course, the opening of the issue of “forced declaration” of ethnic groups of Albanian Gorani and Torbesh, in the new circumstances, was not done to protect such ethnic groups from (Albanian) pressure, but rather to keep closed the issue of assimilation of Albanians of the Orthodox faith in Macedonian, but also Serbian, as through its opening the Macedonian issue was decomposed, as “a political construct” with which it is related,¹⁹³¹ while through the “free” declaration of the Albanian Gorani and Torbesh, important parts were still being separated.

¹⁹²⁹ See Wernicke, Annelise: “*Teodor Ipen dhe Shqipëria në fokusin e Perandorisë Austrohungareze*”, Tiranë, 2012, pp. 109-122. In this book, among other things, the author Wernicke brings Ipen’s conversations with the Russian diplomat Petrayev about the monastery of St. Ivan of Bigur near Dibra, in which case Ipen opposes the position of the Russian diplomat when he says that it was Slavic. Ipen informs him that the monastery was Byzantine and that the Orthodox of Reka were not Slavs, but Albanians. On this occasion, Ipen also brought the testimony extracted from the priest and the teacher of the Galiçik school spoke completely Albanian and that this was true for all the inhabitants there.

¹⁹³⁰ Lita, Qerim: “*Territoret lindore shqiptare 1912-1960*”, Shkup, 2016, pp. 163-187.

¹⁹³¹ The political context of raising the Macedonian issue during the Eastern Crisis and keeping it in play for political purposes mainly related to the fate of the Albanian population in this part, as a majority, is well explained by A. Balducci in the book: “*La questione Macedone in riguardo all Albania e la riforme nella diplomacia Europea*”, 1903 (pp. 159-157)

This discourse will more or less continue to the mid-seventies of the last century, to return later (after the proclamation of Macedonia as an independent state in 1991), when a part of the forcibly assimilated Albanians after the Serbian invasions of 1913 and those of 1918 and 1944, will raise the issue of their identity, declaring themselves Albanians. Some of them, by publishing books, bring a lot of evidence about the state violence used against them to declare themselves Macedonian, especially against the intellectual class.¹⁹³² This highlighted the dimension of anti-Albanian politics, that their religious affiliation (orthodoxy) be used to turn them into Macedonians or Serbs, a policy that in the nineteenth and twentieth century had also influenced the formation of both the Serbian and Macedonian state.

Although the declarations and self-declarations of certain persons about a violent assimilation of Albanians, initially into Serbs and later (from 1944 onwards) mainly in Macedonian, cannot change much from the facts of violence, because a part of the assimilated have long been culturally and otherwise integrated into Macedonian or Serbian society, yet this highlights the anti-Albanian policies of Belgrade and later Skopje using state assimilation programs through the use of religious affiliation. This confirms the fact that in the new state (Serbia, Greece and Montenegro), which appeared in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, accepted by the decisions of the Congress of Berlin 1878, Albanians of the Orthodox faith were a decisive ethnic factor, but also political, playing an important role in the birth of these states, in which case their religious affiliation was used to convert to Serbs, Greeks or Montenegrins.

FROM “WORKING PEOPLE” TO STATE-FORMING NATION

With the cessation of migration to Turkey, which, although officially related to the “will of the citizens of the Turkish nationality to join their motherland in accordance with the centuries-old religious tradition and identity”, the chapter of the state ethnocide against the Albanians was formally concluded which had begun in the 1930s during the Versailles Yugoslavia, to continue in Tito’s Yugoslavia with the Gentleman’s agreement in the 1950s with the Turkish state.

In addition to many factors, among which those related to anti-Albanian projects of Serbian hegemony reinstated in the circumstances of the communist state were important, however, the end of migration to Turkey in the form in which it was concluded, cannot be seen in isolation from the strategic goals mentioned above (the model of socialist self-government and the non-alignment movement) for which Tito was determined and acted in accordance with them.

On both of these plains, Tito appeared a successful pioneer and strategist, even though they may have seemed illusory at first. With the break-up of Stalin in 1949, Tito laid the real foundations for the model of self-governing socialism in Yugoslavia, where the employee began to become a co-owner of socially-owned property (in the form of a shareholder in the

when he says that as long as the Albanians are in the majority in this region, as they really are, there can be no sustainable project for Macedonia as a state of the Macedonians, unless it is proclaimed on the basis of religious affiliation (Orthodox Christianity), although even there Albanians appear as the majority.”

¹⁹³² More on the issue of state violence in Belgrade and Skopje as well as the pressure on Albanians of the Orthodox faith to declare themselves Macedonian and the extent of assimilation during the years 1944-1960, see Prof. Dr. Branislav Sinadovski: “*Shqiptarët ortodoks në Republikën e Maqedonisë*” (“*Orthodox Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia*”), Shkup, 2015, and from the same author: “*Josif Bageri – rilindasi, politikani dhe publicisti i madh shqiptar*” (“*Josif Bager – the great Albanian revivalist, politician and publicist*”).

enterprise) turning it into a liberal society. While carrying the anti-colonial movement on the side of the non-aligned, for which he had great merit, he practically prevented the African, Asian and Latin American states, leaving behind the colonial yoke (through wars or revolutions) from joining the communist bloc, namely the Soviet Union, the main investor in anti-colonial movements (mainly with communist ideologies and revolutionary leaders such as Che Guevara, Sabato, and others), which according to Brezhnev's doctrine, the anti-colonial world was a natural ally of communism.

These aims, however, needed an appropriate climate from within, accompanied by great movements and determined actions, which gained trust, as well as space for action abroad - the best possible political and diplomatic relations with key countries in the region and anywhere in the "third world", to which self-government was an alternative to the social, ideological and capitalist model.

Without underestimating the role of other factors, which undoubtedly appear numerous, by ending emigration to Turkey, Tito created favorable circumstances, which by eliminating the causes of the crisis that engulfed and nurtured the relocation (settling of accounts at the Brioni Plenary in June 1966 with Interior Minister Ranković and the pro-Soviet bureaucratic current from among the ranks of Serb communists) paving the way for social and political change in the country. They were linked to the application of socialist self-government as a liberal social model as well as deep reforms in the Yugoslav federation, which would follow in the early 1960s and continuing in the 1970s with constitutional changes, whereas the federation would rely on a new consensus of the eight equal units, where Kosovo as a province with dual status (federal unit but also part of Serbia) gained the status of an equal federal entity among the eight of them.

The preparation of the ground for major changes, including social change, also required a legal-constitutional basis, related to the need for constitutional reforms, from the republic to federal constitutions. Tito needed them to legitimize the model of socialist self-government as well as the policy of non-alignment, passing it all through "cosmetics" for internal needs, in which case the "socialist" attribute appeared instead of the "popular". Thus, "people's republics" were defined as "socialist republics", as the federation would be defined from "people's" to "socialist".

The socialist state community was also accompanied by a redefinition of sovereignty from "people" to "nations and nationalities".

These changes were significant, although formally it seemed that the class concept of "the people" marked the transition from the class to the ideological (socialist), which gave the impression that the Soviet experience was in fact the opposite, as "the people" was replaced by "nationality" and "nationality" replaced by "national minorities".

Based on these principles, changes began to the constitutions of the federal units, where the "people" attribute was replaced by the "socialist" one, while the republics were redefined as "democratic socialist communities of equal nations and nationalities". With the changes to the constitutional amendments, "nations and nationalities" emerged as bearers of sovereignty, a phenomenon unprecedented in international practice.

This important change, which also meant advancing the constitutional position of the provinces in Serbia, for which Tito was already interested, as it enabled the reform of the Yugoslav federation, however, in the constitution of Serbia was absorbed by the introduction of an amendment by which Serbia emerged as the "author" of the autonomies that could be created according to political needs. With this change, the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo within Serbia, passing through the federation even without constituting "federal Serbia" within the Yugoslav federation, having also a federal aspect, was denied, due to the

fact that authorship was transferred to Serbia, which, as it could create autonomy, it could also cancel it.¹⁹³³

The introduction of the possibility of annulment of autonomy in the Serbian constitution was the first conspiracy against the Yugoslav constitution of 1946 and at the same time what was being warned, in which case the Yugoslav federation had to be democratized while the status of national minorities had to be raised to “nationality” albeit non-sense, the right to participate in state sovereignty was equated. To these Serbian conspiracies, as will be seen, the cunning Tito responded very determined in the decisive moments at the Brioni Plenum, in June 1996, with the overthrow of Ranković and the entire party infrastructure of statist logic, under the “suspicion” that he was preparing to seize power from within, aimed at destroying the course of socialist self-government and restoring statism. By settling accounts with political opponents, mostly Serbs, with changes to the 1968 constitutional amendments to the federal constitution, Tito created the political platform for changes to Serbia’s constitution and those in the 1974 federal constitution.¹⁹³⁴

Compared to Serbia and its efforts to ensure that constitutional changes do not follow the spirit of reforms, that in relation to autonomous units, be used for republican unitarism as a model that would be imposed on the federation, Macedonia was completely subject to Tito’s course for changes in the constitution of the republic, which changed the constitutional position of the Macedonians, but also of the Albanians and others in it. This was to be expected, as Macedonia, which had benefited most from the Yugoslav federation, knew full well that the eventual strengthening of the statist course, as Serbia demanded in the future, could bring Macedonia back under the Belgrade’s tutelage.

Thus, in the 1963 constitution, Macedonia is defined as a “Socialist Republic” and a democratic socialist state community of the people in Macedonia, established on the basis of the power of the working people and self-government.”¹⁹³⁵

With the changes made to the constitutional provisions (amendments XVI and XVII), sovereignty is returned to nationalities too.¹⁹³⁶

This component is best reflected in the Amendment XVII of the 1963 Constitution, which states:

*“The Macedonian people, nationalities and ethnic groups in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia are equal and have the same rights and obligations. Municipalities and the Republic provide nationalities and ethnic groups to be proportionally represented in municipal assemblies and in the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia and to be adequately represented in their bodies.”*¹⁹³⁷

It goes on to say that “every nationality and ethnic group is guaranteed the right to use their language freely, to express and develop their culture, and to establish the institutions and organizations that will secure these rights.”¹⁹³⁸

¹⁹³³ For more see: Kurteshi, Salih: “*Lindja, zhvillimi, pozita dhe aspektet e autonomitetit të Krahnës Socialiste Autonome të Kosovës në Jugosllavinë Socialiste*”, Prishtinë, 1984.

¹⁹³⁴ Idem and Rajović, Radoshin: “*Autonomia e Kosovës*”, Prishtinë, 1987

¹⁹³⁵ Цаца, Горги: “*Уставниот развитац на СРМ*”, Скопје, 1983, стр. 58.

¹⁹³⁶ See: “*Kushtetuta e Republikës Socialiste të Maqedonisë*” of 1963, Amendment XVI:

“The Working people, Macedonian people, nationalities and ethnic groups exercise their sovereign rights in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, as this is in the common interest of working people, nations and nationalities by agreement of the republics and of the provinces, adopted in the Constitution of the SFRY. In the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, nationalities and ethnic groups, working people and citizens perform the general socio-economic regulation and the general political system of the Republic and ensure and realize: sovereignty, national freedom, independence, national integrity of the Republic.”

¹⁹³⁷ Idem.

¹⁹³⁸ Idem.

Education and culture in the languages of nationalities also gain legal-institutional support.

“Municipalities and Republics take care of the development of education in the language of nationalities as well as the development of the press, radio, television and cultural activities of ethnicities and ethnic groups.”¹⁹³⁹

Pursuant to this amendment, the holders of responsibilities and duties for the creation of conditions for education and training of members of nationalities in educational institutions are determined, respectively in the classes in which education and teaching takes place in the language of the respective nationalities.¹⁹⁴⁰

This amendment also stipulates the free use of the flag of nationalities and ethnic groups.

Also, by these changes, in the places where members of nationalities live, in the public and social life, the language and the writing of the nationalities appeared equal to the Macedonian language.¹⁹⁴¹

“In the municipalities where the members of the nationalities live, the decisions and other most important acts of the municipal assemblies and the working organizations are also announced in the language of the nationalities. Public inscriptions in these places are also in the language of nationalities.”¹⁹⁴²

Another important factor with the 1963 constitutional changes was “self-government” as a constitutional category, paving the way for future positive changes in the country’s social and political life, such as the transition from bureaucratic statism to social liberalization and the liberalization of the economy and the relations between “nations” and “nationalities” as bearers of state sovereignty, replacing “majority” and “minority” categories as class aspects of equality.

THE FALL OF RANKOVIC IN 1966 AND ALBANIAN DEMONSTRATIONS IN 1968

The Macedonian Constitution of 1963, initiated by Tito and the course of anti-bureaucratic reforms in society, opened the range of many important changes in social and political life, especially those leading to the affirmation and achievement of equality of national minorities, advanced to “nationalities” equal to the “Macedonian nation”. These changes were created by the party platform of the 4th Congress of the CL of Macedonia, held on March 29-31, 1965. In the conclusions adopted at this congress, among other things, it was emphasized “the realization of the equality of Albanian and Turkish nationalities in the field of education and culture” as a right of national emancipation provided by the self-governing society, demanding the establishment of certain second-level schools in the mother tongue.

In accordance with these attitudes, the Assembly of the SR of Macedonia adopted the Law on Gymnasiums, which for the first time provided for the opening of gymnasiums, respectively classes with instruction in the Albanian language. This was guaranteed by Article 15, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the law. During the school year 1965/66 in the SR of Macedonia, in addition to the gymnasium “Kiril Pejcinovski” in Tetova, gymnasiums in Kumanova, Gostivar, Dibra, Kërçova and Struga were opened.¹⁹⁴³

¹⁹³⁹ Idem.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Idem.

¹⁹⁴¹ Idem.

¹⁹⁴² Idem.

¹⁹⁴³ Lita, Qerim: “*Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*”, Book One, Shkup, 2018, p. 51.

A positive turn in this direction was also noted in the practice of educational and cultural cooperation of Macedonia with Kosovo in accordance with the party positions of the highest Yugoslav levels on this issue, so that the culture of the Albanian population walked common trends, from where it began turning Kosovo into a matrix of Albanian culture and education in Yugoslavia. In this context, the political authorities of Macedonia and Kosovo signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the field of education and culture. The agreement included six points, which, among other things, envisaged that Prishtina would undertake the publication of books in Albanian for schools in Macedonia, while Skopje would publish books in Turkish for schools in Kosovo. This agreement also included the mutual publication of Macedonian authors in the Albanian language and vice versa, as well as a mutual exchange of ensembles and cultural societies, as well as theatrical performances.¹⁹⁴⁴

The meetings of the delegations of the Socialist League of Workers from Macedonia and Kosovo, agreeing on the institutional forms of educational and cultural cooperation between Skopje and Prishtina, also helped deepen this cooperation, where the agreement on joint language and literature curricula in schools and faculties were of importance. Joint groups on Albanian language and literature at the faculty in Prishtina and at the Higher Pedagogical School in Skopje had to define their frameworks.

The scale of this mutual cooperation significantly stimulated the educational and cultural activity of Albanians in Macedonia, which, always in line with party conclusions from the 4th Congress of the CL of Macedonia, was seeking to expand the space and creativity on institutional grounds. Thus, the publishing activity in the Albanian language, compared to the past two decades when the works of Albanian authors were counted on the fingers,¹⁹⁴⁵ from 1964, was a marked development. This was prompted by the Republican Fund for the Advancement of Publishing, with the publication of “*Jehona*” magazine on art and science culture, and then for the weekly “*Flaka e Vëllazërimit*” (“*Flame of Brotherhood*”) and several children’s magazines. For the first time, collections of poems by Albanian authors, such as A. Islami, M. Shehu, S. Selimi, and others were published.

But the most important turning point towards further educational and cultural emancipation of Albanians in Macedonia appeared in the summer of 1966, after the 4th meeting of the Central Committee of the CL of Yugoslavia held from 1-6 July in Brione. As is well known, in Brione, Tito reckoned with the so-called “centralist-unitary” wing associated with Aleksandar Ranković, a close ally of Tito’s wartime collaborators, and an interior minister.

Ranković’s dismissal from state and party positions paved the way for social and political reforms strengthening the course of socialist self-government, as well as the immediate improvement of the position of nationalities, especially Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro. On this occasion, the highest party forum demanded responsibility for the situation, by initiating the so-called process of differentiation of certain structures in the ranks of the state and judicial security service regarding various abuses by

¹⁹⁴⁴ Idem, p. 52.

¹⁹⁴⁵ An information from the Commission for National Minorities in May 1959 revealed that within 13 years only 20 works had been published in Albanian, of which: two originals, 18 translations (10 by Yugoslav authors, 5 by foreign authors, and three publications of political content). See: ДАРМ.1.427.66.83-821-850, ПРЕГЛЕД на положбата на националните малцинство во Македонија, Скопје, 24.01.1959.г. In accordance with this information, the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the CLM, in the meeting held on 10-19 February 1959 found that “... the publishing activity for national minorities is very weak; that not even the most ordinary political literature has been published.” Based on this, the position was taken that “the publication of textbooks and other fiction books should be regulated with Kosovo; to help “*Flaka e Vëllazërimit*” and “*Birlik*” to be reinforced with staff and come out with more pages”. The meeting also discussed about the Albanian language, and a position was taken that “the issue of the Albanian language should be resolved in principle”. Here the dilemma lies between the Albanian literary language and the language used in Kosovo. This issue should be submitted to the Central Committee of the CL of Yugoslavia to be resolved together with comrades from Kosovo. An opinion was expressed that it would not be possible to take on another languages, except for the language of the mother country”. (Doc.ДАРМ.1.159, in Lita, Qerim: “*Problemi shqiptar në RR(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*”, Shkup, 2018, Book One, p. 44).

this service, for which Macedonia's highest party forums quickly declared themselves,¹⁹⁴⁶ although an approach was lacking to open them according to their true dimensions.

But, as will be seen, it will be Kosovo and the socio-political climate created there for the abuses to be exposed in accordance with the real causes (reincarnation of anti-Albanian policy in the new circumstances), which affected even Macedonia to open issues together with their consequences, because in the field of culture and education they were related to the cultural and emancipatory identity of Albanians in Yugoslavia, which had to be common and in accordance with the criteria of equality for which declaratively Yugoslavia was engaged. Kosovo's approach to investigate on the abuses at their roots, regardless of location, also turned the focus to Macedonia, which reflected many of the problems in the field of culture and education, which were also related to Kosovo, as they created an asymmetry of criteria and realities provoking the reactions of the Albanian intelligentsia, which demanded that the national equality not be treated with different measures in Skopje and Prishtina. This will be emphasized at a meeting of the Kosovo delegation in Belgrade in March 1967 with Eduard Kardelj, Speaker of the Yugoslav Parliament, and Tito's close associate - responsible for social, political and constitutional reforms - to be sanctioned in the constitution of 1974. The meeting emphasized the need to harmonize the common criteria of cultural and educational equality, which would be valid throughout the country, built on the standards of the party platform at the state level.¹⁹⁴⁷

The focus of Kosovo's political leadership on the "common criteria of cultural and educational equality" that would apply to the whole country, in Macedonia will be interpreted "as an attempt to create a single center for all Albanians in Yugoslavia", which meant Prishtina, which, with the directives of the highest Yugoslav party leader, raised the need for a meeting of the highest party level between Macedonia and Kosovo, in order to "harmonize stances" for "locking the door to new efforts to exploiting equality for nationalistic purposes". Such a meeting was held in Ohrid on September 7, 1967. Macedonian leaders not accidentally focused on "the tendencies to create a single center for all Yugoslav Albanians",¹⁹⁴⁸ as by doing so they were throwing the ball over an issue appearing "anathematized" by a burden that this "would lead to the creation of an Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia, the center of which would be Prishtina" and similar, for what in Macedonia over 170 Albanian teachers and intellectuals were convicted in a short time and many others were expelled from the educational process and fired.¹⁹⁴⁹

The Kosovo delegation was being denied an opportunity to raise issues in line with the main causes - national discrimination and abuse by state bodies, which were numerous in Macedonia and related to Kosovo. Of course, the Kosovo delegation would not take the bait. Knowingly, Veli Deva had asked the Albanians in Macedonia to enjoy all the national rights guaranteed by the constitution, but by no means that equality would produce "a center from which it would be directed". Deva stated that "our only center for equality - is the party

¹⁹⁴⁶ At the Meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Macedonia, which was held immediately after the 4th plenum of the Central Committee of the CLY, full support was given to the opening of the differentiation process coming out of Brione. "The Executive Committee gives full support to the positions and conclusions of the EC of CC of CLY for the urgent cleaning of the situation and bringing to justice the culprits and the main leaders of the anti-ethnic and anti-party phenomena - Rankovic and Stevanovic". (Dok.ДАРМ.1.427.150.7/177-181) from Lita, Qerim: "*Problemi shqiptar në RR(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", Shkup, 2018, Book One, p. 44).

¹⁹⁴⁷ Archiv Slovenije, doc.1521, pov.br.02.212/1, Beograd, 7. VI. 1967 Razgovor Predsednika Savezne Skupstine E. Kardeljja sa delegacijom Autonomne Pokrajine Kosova i Metohije, održan 21 marta 1967 godine (zabeleške), by Lita, Qerim: "*Problemi shqiptar në RR(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", Shkup, 2018, Book One, p. 44).

¹⁹⁴⁸ See the position of Vanco Apostolski, a member of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the CLM on this issue, in which case he sees this as harmful, because it "destroys relations within the federal units and their historical contexts with mother countries". (Lita, Qerim: "*Problemi Shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", Shkup, 2018, Book One, p. 60.)

¹⁹⁴⁹ More about the sentencing of a large number of Albanian intellectuals in Macedonia on charges of "hostile activity related to the demand for a joint Albanian republic in Yugoslavia", see Lita, Qerim: "*Çështja shqiptare në Maqedoni pas Brioneve*", in Gjurmime Albanologjike, Series of Historical Sciences, no. 37, Prishtinë, 2008, pp. 29-50.

platform and documents as well as the Constitution, which must be implemented with dedication”.¹⁹⁵⁰

The opening of these topics and the reactions that aroused them, especially after the revelation of numerous abuses against Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia from 1948-1966, especially during the action to collect weapons in 1956 and those causing migration to Turkey, based in Skopje, in the years 1951-1961, which was preceded by the census of the population in Macedonia in 1953, in which case, through violent methods that had been emphasized in the highest party forums, a good part of the Albanians had declared themselves Turks, had raised the need for drafting of a political platform about the further ideological and political approach to the equality of Albanians with Macedonians in the SR of Macedonia in accordance with concrete facts.

The concrete facts clearly showed that the Albanians in Macedonia, from 1948 onwards, were discriminated against from many points of view. But the biggest discrimination, including almost figurative employment and in most difficult jobs,¹⁹⁵¹ had been in the cultural and educational plan. Relying on the concept of “minority”, the cultural activity of Albanians had to shrink to some amateur societies, with mainly “mixed” programs, which included drama and reciting groups. Degradation to amateurism also included an Albanian Drama within the Minority Theater, founded in 1951, which, in 1956, “for financial reasons” turned into an “amateur theater”.¹⁹⁵²

But, preceding the political platform, “Current issues in the realization of the policy of equality of nationalities in the Republic of Macedonia and the ideological and political activity of CLM”, presented to the 14th Meeting of the Central Committee of CLM, however, the 8th Joint Meeting of the Presidency and the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the CLM held on 17 November and 4 December 1976 was of importance. That meeting was presented with a voluminous material describing the process of development of “Albanian and Turkish nationalities” from the point of view of “achievements” and more or less of weaknesses and problems that had already been opened in the Plenum of the Central Committee of CLY of Brioni a year before. Conclusions were drawn about the numerous abuses of state bodies against minorities (primarily the Albanians) and measures were taken (removal of Ranković and his associates from the post of Minister of Police as well as his exclusion from party forums).

Although, in this meeting, “positive steps towards overcoming difficulties” were emphasized and the climate of cooperation and trust with the Kosovo leadership about joint programs serving further affirmation of cultural values of Albanians was positively assessed, being in line with the spirit of self-governing socialist education”, however, the working material states that “the cooperation of the Albanians of the SR of Macedonia with the Albanians of other parts of Yugoslavia” should be viewed with reservations and opposition by some Macedonians. According to them, this “threatens the republican borders, respectively represents the first step towards strengthening the separatism of Albanians in Yugoslavia”, while on the other hand, Albanians see this cooperation as an attempt to unite all Albanians and

¹⁹⁵⁰ Idem.

¹⁹⁵¹ In 1957, the number of Albanians employed in Macedonia was a total of 8,603, of which only 91 were highly qualified, while the rest were semi-skilled (2,395) and others unskilled, employed in mines, construction companies, and utility services.

¹⁹⁵² ДАРМ.1.427.84.80/390-392 – Информација на Комисијата за национално малцинство, 27 мај 1958. Год. Скопје.

in such conditions declare a center that would be deserving to resolve the Albanian issue in Yugoslavia".¹⁹⁵³

The second phenomenon, related to the "creation of an Albanian center" in Yugoslavia, referred to "the increasingly frequent demands of Albanian intelligence for the political and cultural unification of Albanians in Yugoslavia" in accordance with the criteria of equality, in which case Prishtina's "*Rilindja*" newspaper became a daily newspaper for all Albanians in Yugoslavia with "*Flaka e Vëllazërimit*" turning into a cultural weekly.

Djoko Mitrev objected that the request for the establishment of an Albanian cultural center would be considered a danger, saying that "the tendencies for the establishment of an Albanian center should not be considered a priori separatist", or even dramatized as they appear as measures for fulfillment of the needs of nationalities. Mitrev, among other things, expressed surprise at how it was possible that the demand for the publication of "*Flaka e Vëllazërimit*" in daily life will be disputed, when that right belongs to Albanians and they should have had it from the beginning.¹⁹⁵⁴

Mitrev and his co-thinker Katarijev¹⁹⁵⁵ were quickly opposed by Krste Crvenkovski. The party leader stressed that the fear of an "Albanian center" was also discussed at the meeting with the communists from Kosovo and was assessed as harmful, because "if we now issue an Albanian unite slogan, then we must be clear that there are other powerful forces to use similar slogans to threaten even the disintegration of this Yugoslav community".¹⁹⁵⁶

The spirit that Crvenkovski imposed on the Party Plenum at this meeting also took place on the "Platform" of the Central Committee of the CLM. Azem Zylfiqari and Hixhet Ramadani also joined it.

This platform, despite the political euphemisms about equality, actually spread the fear of equality, which began to curb two processes that had been initiated by the June 1966 Brioni Plenum: advancing national equality in the cultural and educational spheres as well as socially and politically, in which case the measures related to the employment of Albanians in accordance with their population structure and representation in the state administration (judiciary, police and army) where they were discriminated were important.

In this regard, national symbols and their use were also important, for which, also, the highest Yugoslav party forum had given the green light, but it was expected that, at the republican and provincial levels, this would be regulated by law. In this case, Macedonia had been intensely apprehensive, arguing that "allowing the use of the Albanian flag, with the exception of private celebrations, was a step towards the establishment of a single Albanian political center in Yugoslavia". This was justified by the Government of Macedonia on the position that the national flag of the Albanian and Turkish nationalities can be used only in private cases and not on official state events.¹⁹⁵⁷

¹⁹⁵³ ДАРМ.1.427.143. 5/171-213, speech of Vanço Apostolli in Lita, Qerim "*Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", Book One, Shkup, 2018, p. 63, by Lita, Qerim: "*Problemi shqiptar në RR(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", Shkup, 2018, Book One.

¹⁹⁵⁴ Idem, Djoko Mitrev's speech.

¹⁹⁵⁵ CLM Central Committee member *Ivan Katradziev*, opposing Crvenkovski's position, stressed: "In the face of Serbs and other nations, in the current period, we have been behaving with a certain inferiority, while in front of the Albanian people with a clear superiority. This, in fact, is a source of national clashes, which in certain periods of our socialist development were more or less manifested, but today they are visible and have come to the surface." (ДАРМ.1.427.142.20/237-403), by Lita, Qerim: "*Problemi shqiptar në RR(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*", Shkup, 2018, Book One).

¹⁹⁵⁶ Idem.

¹⁹⁵⁷ ДАРМ.1.427.197.16/266-268.

Similar attitudes rightly revolted the Albanians of Macedonia, especially the intelligentsia and students (many of whom attended their studies in Prishtina), who began to form the conviction that apart from a few small cosmetic changes, Macedonia's political leadership did not want to follow the course of the profound social and political reforms initiated by the highest party forums of Yugoslavia by the Plenum of Brioni, which provided for the improvement of the position of the Albanians and the change of their status from that of a detached minority to an interconnected nationality in the Yugoslav space in the way of a common Albanian identity.

In the circumstances, it was expected that there would be reactions. They were given great impetus by the Kosovo demonstrations, which took place in many Kosovo cities from November 5 (in Prizren, Peja, Istog, Ferizaj, Gjilan and Podujeva) ending on November 27 in Prishtina. For the first time in these demonstrations a demand was made for the Republic of Kosovo. While in Prishtina, in one of the largest Albanian demonstrations held at that time in the former Yugoslavia (attended by over one hundred thousand people), in addition to the slogan for the Republic of Kosovo, some other demands were presented, among which the most prominent were that the status of the nation be recognized to the Albanians, that national symbols be used freely, and most importantly that Kosovo had a university in the Albanian language.¹⁹⁵⁸

The demonstrations in Prishtina were attended by a large number of Albanian students from Macedonia studying at the faculties of Prishtina, as well as Albanian intellectuals from Skopje, who had recently begun to become part of joint creative and intellectual circles.

Although the response of the police and the state was harsh on the demonstrators in Prishtina (in which case a young man Valon Murati was killed and many others were injured), this did not stop the demonstration from spreading to Macedonia. Only one reason was required, and it was not by chance that it came to Tetova on the evening of December 22 by a Macedonian photographer (Srečko Janevski),¹⁹⁵⁹ who forcibly removed the national flag placed at Ismail Ejupi's bar, near the town square.¹⁹⁶⁰

This provoked the Albanians, who revolted and ran after the perpetrator, who was sheltered in Hotel "Makedonija". The crowd had broken the windows of the hotel and then headed to Janevski's store, where the shop windows were broken. The protesters dispersed after the intervention of law enforcement agencies.¹⁹⁶¹

The "trouble-maker" photographer with the removal of the flags and the reactions of the protesters, however, had served another provocation of the law enforcement agencies, who, that same evening, had arrested a group of Albanian intellectuals, teachers, and doctors from Tetova, who went to launch a protest to the Chairman of the Tetovo Municipal Committee, Xhemal Veseli. News of their arrest had spread rapidly with Albanian youth groups gathering in front of the photographer Janevski's shop in the morning and chanting slogans against Macedonian chauvinism, and such as "*We want equality*" and "*Long live Fadil Hoxha*" (the latter one of Kosovo leaders), etc. The crowd had soon moved towards the city center. It was joined by high

¹⁹⁵⁸ At more length on 1968 Prishtina demonstrations, see: Novosella, *Selatin "Demonstratat e gjashtëdhjetetës"*, 1, 2, 3, Prishtinë, 2008; Buxhovi, Jusuf: "*Kthesa historike*" I-V, Prishtinë, 2015, Book V, pp. 108-109.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Photographer Janevski was among the Macedonian provocateurs against the use of the Albanian flag, who had sent a petition to the state authorities for disallowing the depiction of the Albanian flag. (See: Salihu, Salih: "*Ngajrje, dhe dëshmi – diskriminimi i shqiptarëve në Maqedoni*", Tetovë, 2011, pp. 63-66.)

¹⁹⁶⁰ Idem.

¹⁹⁶¹ Idem.

school students of “Kiril Pejcinovski” and other citizens. Several hundred demonstrators had entered the building of the CLM Municipal Committee and hoisted two national flags. The large number of demonstrators, moving on the main streets, had broken some shops and some cars, had entered the building of the Municipal Assembly, though without causing any damage.¹⁹⁶²

The demonstrations ended in the late hours, but the actions of the law enforcement agencies had started after the demonstrators were dispersed. Numerous police units from Skopje and other parts launched raids and arrests of demonstrators, many of them critical intellectuals involved in public and political debates over the situation in Macedonia, who had called for immediate change.¹⁹⁶³

Imprisonments and repressive measures from Tetova were extended to Skopje, Struga, Dibra, Gostivar and other Albanian-populated areas. Many intellectuals, teachers and students were imprisoned on charges of “hostile activity”. In addition to imprisonment, arrests ending in the imposition of numerous sentences ranging from misdemeanor ones (30 days) to criminal charges on “hostile activity against the state and the people” (punishable from 1 to seven years),¹⁹⁶⁴ a differentiation process in education also opened, in which case, under the anathema of “ideological-political inappropriateness”, many teachers and educators were expelled from the educational process.

Repressive measures against demonstrators and their expansion in other parts of the country, where the suspicion of “hostile activity” had turned into a card to be followed by all those who demanded equality and against discrimination for years, a reality that had been condemned by the Brioni Plenum, added dissatisfaction in Kosovo, as well as other parts of the country.

An open criticism to what was already emerging as a “campaign against Albanian intellectuals” in Macedonia appeared also in the Yugoslav press from Zagreb and Ljubljana. It was demanded that the country’s highest political and state leadership, which had rightly raised the issue of discrimination against Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia, and other parts of the country and had taken party and state measures against certain leaders of the country (dismissal of Ranković and Stefanović and part of the police apparatus) harmonize attitudes regarding the criteria of national equality so that there is no discrepancy between the assessments of Prishtina and Skopje on what is a national right and “hostile activity”.¹⁹⁶⁵

This prompted Fadil Hoxha, a member of the Central Committee of the CLY Central Committee, to raise his voice in Belgrade against the “very harsh course” being pursued in Skopje against the demonstrators, rather than implementing the positions of the highest party and state forums for equality.

Notably, at the meeting in Belgrade, the Macedonian party leader K. Crvenkovski, not only defended the Macedonian course, but also by what he had said that “the demonstrations in Kosovo were very gently dealt with” and that “a very few people have been arrested and most of them have been convicted of misdemeanors” had “returned the ball” to the opposite side.

¹⁹⁶² Idem.

¹⁹⁶³ According to official sources, on the occasion of the demonstrations in Tetova, a large number of demonstrators were arrested, against 153 of them repressive measures were taken. 46 of them were education employees, 34 students, 11 school-children, 27 workers, 10 farmers, and others. 13 teachers, 2 doctors, 3 students, 7 workers, two craftsmen, 2 clerks and 3 students were indicted on criminal charges. (Lita, Qerim: “*Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*”, Book One, Shkup, 2018, p. 73.)

¹⁹⁶⁴ The Skopje Court soon sentenced 31 people, mostly teachers and intellectuals, to 1 to 7 years in prison. (ДАПМ.1.427.197.39/714-721).

¹⁹⁶⁵ “*Vjesnik*”, Zagreb, 22 June 1969.

Crvenkovski also stated that in Macedonia “the police imprisoned Albanians not only in Tetova, but throughout Western Macedonia for hostile activities against the state and the people.”¹⁹⁶⁶

These and similar attitudes, which increasingly came from Serbia and Macedonia, forced Tito and his closest collaborators to re-emphasize the issues of equality of nations and nationalities at the 9th Congress of the CLY in March 1969 as “everyone’s duty” (ranging from a critical approach to shared platforms).¹⁹⁶⁷ On this occasion, not coincidentally, Tito had called “fair” three of the demands that had appeared in the demonstrations in Prishtina on November 27, 1968:

- the right to Kosovo’s representation as adequately as possible on the federation;
- the fastest possible economic development of Kosovo and
- the right to use national symbols (flag) for which clear provisions should be passed.¹⁹⁶⁸

The positions of the 9th Congress of the CLY on the promotion of equality of nations and nationalities, with special emphasis on the right to a common cultural and educational identity at the national level and the conclusions seeking an advancement of the constitutional position of Kosovo in the federation, had positive effects in three directions: towards Belgrade - to accept the change of Kosovo’s constitutional position in the federation, meaning that in accordance with the positions of the 9th Congress of the CLY, amendments were drafted by which the Assembly of Serbia would pave the way for new Kosovo-Serbia relations towards the Federation (where the demand for the Republic of Kosovo was excluded but by no means its position as a federal unit equal to the others); towards Prishtina - that the demand for the Republic of Kosovo be rejected, but without being called counter-revolutionary, as Serbia and Macedonia wished, and instead a request for equal representation in the Yugoslav federation be made, a change that meant that from an institutional point of view Kosovo with an Albanian language university and scientific institutions creating its own cultural, educational self-governing-socialist identity, which could not be other than Albanian, and towards Skopje - that the equality of Albanians had two lines: one in Macedonia (in education, culture, employment, and equal representation in the republican administration), and the other in the direction of a mutual agreement with Kosovo on cooperation in education and culture so that this would help a common Albanian identity in the Yugoslav space with Prishtina bearing the responsibility to be in the spirit of coexistence of nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia and their equality in accordance with the character of the socialist self-governing society.

Tito’s readiness that after settling scores with Ranković’s statist-bureaucratic faction, the course of the announced social and economic reforms would go in the right direction in order to gain the model of socialist self-government, followed by the change of the constitutional position of the provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina in the federation) which changed its character, required the change of the constitutional position of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, which meant that even as a nationality, they had to have an “identity card” that could not be other than Kosovo,¹⁹⁶⁹ was rightly understood in Serbia and especially so in Macedonia.

¹⁹⁶⁶ Lita, Qerim: “*Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*”, Book One, Shkup, 2018, p. 74.

¹⁹⁶⁷ “IX Kongres Saveza Komunist Jugoslavije”, “Komunist”, Beograd 1969, pp. 86-87.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kosova*” I-V, Prishtinë, 2015, Book V, pp. 108-109, and Bilandžić, Dušan: “*Povijest izbliza. Memoarski zapisi 1945-2005*”, Zagreb, 2006.

¹⁹⁶⁹ About Kosovo as an “identity card” for the Albanians of Yugoslavia and its importance for future relations in the post-Tito Yugoslav federation, with Macedonia being focused as a neuralgic point of crisis because it, led by Serbia, would not be able to withstand this test, see: Strhöm, Karl Gustav: “*Ohne Tito, kann Jugoslawien überleben?*”, Wien, Graz, Köln, 1976, and Meier, Viktor: “*Wie wurde Jugoslawien verspielt*”, München, 1995.

But understanding “rightly” advancing Kosovo’s constitutional position in the Yugoslav federation, such as those in progress, and taking their epilogue to the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, was not just a matter of internal relations. They also emerged as part of Tito’s strategy in relation to Albania and the developments there, which affected regional and geostrategic and geopolitical issues and beyond, where Tito, as the leader of the non-aligned bloc between the antagonistic blocs (NATO and the Warsaw Pact), was very much interested on Albania, which had officially withdrawn from the Warsaw Pact after the USSR intervention in Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1968 to remain “neutral”, namely outside the Soviet military presence. Since Albania’s political and economic ties with China could not produce any military consequences, Tito also aimed to escalate Albania’s military withdrawal from the USSR with a softening of dogmatic communism, which could alternatively have Yugoslav self-government, as a liberal social and political model, which enjoyed increasing support among non-aligned countries as well as western social democracies. For this reason, Tito considered that the advancement of Kosovo’s position in the federation as well as the further affirmation of the Albanians in Yugoslavia in the economic, educational and cultural plan, with Prishtina with the Albanian language university and other scientific and cultural institutions being significantly more advanced than those of Albania, practically becoming an important center of Albanians in Yugoslavia, could influence Albania, on the way out of communist isolation and Stalinist dogma, possibly turning to the Yugoslav model of self-government, for which Kosovo and the position of Albanians could be used as a connecting bridge.¹⁹⁷⁰

Tito’s orientation towards Albania was, in a way, compatible with some Western European countries, especially with Federal Germany and France, which were very interested in a militarily neutral Albania, which they would help unreservedly economically, though unable to establish any economic cooperation with Tirana, because Albania, with its well-known ideological abomination, still refused any loans or development program that might come from the west. For both Bonn and Paris, Yugoslavia and Tito were a good alibi for “softening” the ideological barriers of economic co-operation with Albania if they passed through Belgrade in a form of a “special partnership” between the two countries, which once were very much close and near a union even.¹⁹⁷¹

As the component of Albania’s possible proximity to the West could be linked to the agenda of Albania’s cooperation with Yugoslavia, as it had actually begun in the field of education and culture, Tito authorized the Kosovo leadership to require the widest possible cooperation with Albania not only in the educational, cultural and economic plan, but also in the

¹⁹⁷⁰ *Mahmut Bakalli*, a communist leader from Kosovo, a close associate of Tito in the 1970s, confirms that the well-known course of Yugoslavia’s proximity to Albania through Kosovo was used for new relations between the two countries, in which case Albanian politicians from Kosovo were tasked with influencing them. In a conversation with the well-known German publicist Viktor Meier for the newspaper “*Franfurter Allgemeine*”, in November 1978, among others, said that “Tito reckoned that after Albania’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, it had to be helped by all means to get away from isolation and the radical Stalinist course”. For Tito, it was important that the development of Kosovo, as well as the advancement of its position at the level of the Yugoslav federation, as well as a general improvement for the position of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, would turn into a bridge of closeness between the two countries. Bakalli says that Tito had personally asked Kosovo to take on this role, and that for this he had offered full support from the “abuses” that could appear in this regard by opponents of this course. To the question if the “Yugoslav self-government” was a possible option for a dogmatic-Stalinist Albania, at a time when E. Hoxha had also published a book calling it “a form of modern revisionism”, Bakalli said that reality was important and not propaganda, which would determine the course of positive turns in Albania because Albania had reached a state that had to come out of the collapse in which it found himself, otherwise it risked an internal coup by the Soviet supporters in Tirana, being quite a few and expecting it turned to Moscow, which posed a great danger to non-aligned Yugoslavia and the region as a whole.” (See: Meier, Viktor: “*Wie Jugoslawien verspielt wurde*”, München, 1995, pp. 56-57).

¹⁹⁷¹ Idem.

economic one, which would allow Kosovo to become a single reference of direct conventions with Albania and comprehensive agreements from cultural, educational to economic cooperation at state levels.¹⁹⁷²

Such were those on the educational cooperation between the University of Prishtina and Tirana, exchange of university staff, joint research and scientific projects, joint manifestations of national levels (marking the 500th anniversary of Skanderbeg's death, Standard Language Convention, marking the 100th anniversary of the Albanian League of Prizren with the inauguration of the Memorial House of the League in Prizren in 1978, joint publications of books, joint theatrical and concert performances and exhibitions of art and others), created the circumstances with which objectively creativity and culture Albanians in Yugoslavia, passing through Prishtina with the seal of a whole, communicating with what was being created in Albania and being connected at the national level. Thus, the mutual cooperation in the field of education and culture created circumstances for both the ideological and the state division between the two countries to face mutual cooperation. For this reason, Tito had demanded that neither Prishtina nor Belgrade enter into political controversies with Tirana, which, despite good cooperation, still retained the intonations against Yugoslav self-government and against Tito and his "revisionist course".¹⁹⁷³

In these circumstances when Prishtina and Kosovo in domestic and foreign relations, especially related to Albania, gained a new weight, Macedonian politicians, among them Crvenkovski and his circle who were beginning to interpret the decisions of the plenum of Brioni about "advancing the position of Albanians" "threatening Yugoslavia" on the grounds that "the creation of a leading center" (thought to be Kosovo) opened the issue of an Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia, which had already been "promoted" by the request for the Republic of Kosovo that had emerged in the Kosovo demonstrations of November 1968 turned to the "course of advancing the position of nationalities", so that the picture for Kosovo and the Albanians in Yugoslavia appeared as foreseen by Tito in the context of his geopolitical and geostrategic plans of global concepts. And, as had happened in the forties with the creation of the Albanian Communist Party in Albania and its withdrawal to the Eastern world, even in the seventies, Tito was playing with the main levers of Albanian politics in both Tirana and Prishtina, which influenced the fate of Kosovo, but also of the Yugoslav federation with it.

In January 1969, the Assembly of the SR of Macedonia adopted ten constitutional amendments, which became part of the Constitution of Macedonia. Among these amendments, the 14th Amendment was important stipulating for certain advancements on the status of

¹⁹⁷² From the author's conversation with *Mahmut Bakalli* in Prishtina, in May 2002. According to Bakalli, Tito asked the Kosovo leadership to create all the conditions for a wider cooperation with Albania, without getting into controversy about the ideological course of Albania and the attacks that Enver repeatedly undertook against the course of self-government and Yugoslav "revisionism".

¹⁹⁷³ From the conversation with *Prof. Pajazit Nushi*, in Prishtina in 2003, then Deputy Chairman of the Executive Council of Kosovo, responsible for relations with Albania. Prof. Nushi confirms the position of the highest party and state leadership that relations with Albania (educational, cultural, sports, and others) pass through Kosovo. "We had the support of the federal government for any agreement with Tirana." According to Professor Nushi, in a conversation that Tito had with the leadership, F. Hoxha and M. Bakalli, on the occasion of being in favor of the standardized language, a position that had to be kept by the representatives of Kosovo at the Language Congress in Tirana in 1972, without hesitating to talk to Enver in the meeting, he instructed that the ideological propaganda coming from Tirana, Prishtina should respond with films in Albanian language, and Albanian language plays on Prishtina Television, as well as by holding scientific symposia in which the issues of historiography and Albanian linguistics outside the ideological dogma would be treated objectively.

Albanians and Turks: linguistic equality at the municipal level, guaranteeing the development of education and culture, and others.¹⁹⁷⁴

The Assembly of Macedonia also adopted a resolution obliging state bodies and institutions to consistently respect the rights of Albanian nationality guaranteed by the Constitution,¹⁹⁷⁵ including: language equality, final solution of the problem of Albanian education in the Republic, an accelerated development of culture (the demand was for programs in Albanian and Turkish at the state Radio Television of Skopje), daily publication of the “Flaka e Vëllazërimit” newspaper, establishing necessary conditions for the work of the Theater of Nations in Skopje (raising the treatment from amateur to professional theater), the use of the flag of nationalities, and others. At the end, the Resolution stated that “the Executive Council will take care of the implementation of tasks”, and if necessary, “will determine the direction of the work of the republican governing bodies in the implementation of the provisions and positions included in it.”¹⁹⁷⁶

The 1969 impasse created by Crvenkovski and his followers, influenced by Belgrade’s political underworld of allegedly the equality of Albanians threatening Yugoslavia, especially his views on the “Albanian center” and the “national flag as an inspiration for irredentism”, and similar abominations finally came to an end in October 1973, when the Executive Council of Macedonia approved the text of the Draft Law on the Use of Flags and decided to send it to the Assembly for consideration and approval. The Assembly of Macedonia, at its session of November 12, 1973, voted on the law.¹⁹⁷⁷

Its Article 6 stated: “Representatives of Albanian and Turkish nationality, may freely use their national flag, in all cases where the use of the flag of SRM is provided.”¹⁹⁷⁸

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES OF 1974 AND THE MOMENTUM OF NATIONAL EMANCIPATION ASSOCIATED WITH KOSOVO

The constitutional amendments of 1974, the third in a row since the creation of AVNOJ Yugoslavia, also changed the relations of the bearers of state sovereignty at the federal, republican, and provincial levels (provinces appeared as constitutive elements of the Yugoslav federation), where the current class category “working people” was replaced with “nation”, and “national minority” was defined as “nationality”.¹⁹⁷⁹

This constitutional categorization had to do with the right of “self-determination to the point of secession” for the republics in relation to the federation stemming from the self-determination of nations of which nationalities were deprived, as they already had a “mother state”.

In accordance with the Constitution of the SFRY, the preamble of which defined it as a “state of equal nations and nationalities”,¹⁹⁸⁰ the Socialist Republic of Macedonia is also defined as a nation state of the Macedonian people, but in its preamble the Republic is defined

¹⁹⁷⁴ ДАРМ.1.158.184.17/388-399 – Уставни Амандамани Собранието на Социалистичка Република Македонија.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Lita, Qerim: “*Problemi shqiptar në RP(S) të Maqedonisë 1944-1974*”, Book One, Shkup, 2018, pp. 74-75.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Idem.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Idem, p. 75.

¹⁹⁷⁸ Idem.

¹⁹⁷⁹ See “*Kushtetuta e RFSJ-së 1974*”, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1974, Article 1, p. 3.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Idem.

as a nation state. of the Macedonian people ", but also "a state of Albanian and Turkish nationality in it".¹⁹⁸¹

Thus, the 1963 Constitution and the 1974 Constitution promoted the legal-constitutional status of Albanians in Macedonia. Their definition as a constitutive subject of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia together with the Macedonian people, among other things, paved the way for two important developments:

- *their representation in state bodies and*
- *strengthening of collective rights in the republic*

Of these changes, as it was seen, however, the most obvious were those in the educational and cultural plain, expressed with a high involvement of Albanians in all levels of education from primary to university and the expansion of cultural activity (publication of books in the Albanian language, from literary to scientific), expansion of the press as well as Albanian programs on state radio and television. Official figures show that in the seventies, teaching in Albanian language took place in 211 primary schools, which included 45,931 students and in 78 primary schools with special classes taught in Albanian language with 28,471 students.¹⁹⁸²

In the oriented secondary education for the school year 1979/1980, teaching in Albanian language took place in 17 secondary schools, in 26 professional directions 8,226 students were included.¹⁹⁸³

Over 4000 Albanian teachers and professors were involved in the Albanian language education system at all levels.

In addition to the inclusion of Albanian children in primary and secondary schools with instruction in Albanian, a good part of those who completed secondary schools, attended studies in Albanian language at the Pedagogical Academy and the Faculty of Philology in the Department of Language and Literature in Skopje. Meanwhile, 698 Albanian students were included in the University "Cyril and Methodius".¹⁹⁸⁴

However, the largest number of those who continued their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the Albanian language were included in the University of Prishtina, a development that will be of great importance for the cultural, educational and political relations of the Albanians in Yugoslavia. In 1979/1980, at the University of Prishtina, over 5000 Albanian students from Macedonia were studying, which made up one-fifth of the total number at the largest Albanian university in the Balkans.

Following these positive changes, the Macedonia-Kosovo relations also appear. Until then, economic cooperation, based on almost colonial relations (supplying Skopje Zeležara Iron Plant with electricity from Kosovo at "guaranteed" prices significantly below those of the domestic market and minerals from Trepça, as raw material to be processed in Macedonia), was giving way to agreements on which the market economy operated on the basis planned by joint agreements. The policy of balanced exchanges paved the way for Kosovo's goods to enter the Macedonian markets, with cooperative ties emerging on both sides, joint ventures, which gave impetus to local products and representation with common products, especially those from agriculture in the Yugoslav market and abroad, for which there was a great interest inside and outside the country.

What gave the most impetus to the cooperation between Macedonia and Kosovo was the field of education and culture, in which case Kosovo, for the Albanians of Macedonia,

¹⁹⁸¹ See preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Article 1:

"The Socialist Republic of Macedonia is a national state of the Macedonian people and a state of Albanian and Turkish nationality in it, based on the sovereignty of the people, power and self-government of the working class and all working people and the democratic socialist self-governing community of working peoples and citizens, of the Macedonian people and with it of equal Albanian and Turkish nationality."

¹⁹⁸² See: Starova, Vullnet: "*Jeta e përbashkët – kombësia shqiptare në RS të Maqedonisë*", "Komunist", Shkup, 1988.

¹⁹⁸³ Idem.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Idem.

turned into an “matrix” of identity and rightly so, because historically, from antiquity, the Middle Ages and especially the political Albanianism of the last century, had always been so. Of course, this great turn gave the biggest impetus to the University of Prishtina, as well as its extraordinary role in creating this awareness, which was also officially accepted by the Yugoslav policy as an “Albanian university” among the most powerful in the region.

However, the large influx of Albanian students from Macedonia to Prishtina was marked by the beginning of the 1960s, when the first Albanian-language faculties opened in Kosovo, setting quotas for Albanian students from Macedonia, Montenegro, and the Presheva Valley, which accounted for up to 20 percent of the total. In some faculties this was even greater.

With the establishment of the University of Prishtina quotas for students from Macedonia maintained the level of up to 20% per year which put the number of the number of Albanian students from Macedonia in the faculties of the University of Prishtina to five thousand.

In addition to the guaranteed enrollment in all faculties, the University of Prishtina as well as scientific institutions were always open for postgraduate studies for those who completed their studies in Prishtina and were determined for scientific-research work. Upon completing their master’s or doctoral studies, a large number of Macedonian graduates remained in Kosovo. Scientific institutions in Kosovo offered opportunities for scientific work and permanent research.

Studying in Prishtina, the remaining part of those who graduated in Kosovo, but also their return to Macedonia, were creating real circumstances for the Albanian ethnicity in Kosovo and Macedonia to be comprehensively linked to a national identity absorbing the “limits” coming from the “socialist society”. This was facilitated by the very good institutional and political relations between Prishtina and Skopje built on a political consensus in the Yugoslav federation, that the administrative borders, which existed between the republics and the provinces, should not present any obstacles to the common affirmation within Yugoslavia of equal nations and nationalities.¹⁹⁸⁵

On the contrary, with the party platform emerging from the 10th Congress of the CLY in 1974, the republics and provinces were obliged, as was the case with the “Yugoslav common market” within the socialist self-governing economy, to act similarly to culture as a value of the nations and nationalities, which had to count freely in the whole Yugoslav space, where each national culture was at the same time a common Yugoslav culture, not out of an ideological approach, but rather of free access to all.¹⁹⁸⁶

In this free model of the cultures of nations and nationalities as well as the participatory-anticipatory relations within the “common whole”, there was also the culture of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, which was building its institutional “matrix” in Kosovo at the University of Prishtina and its institutes (of Albanology and History).

This relation that will bring out a common Albanian intelligence in Yugoslavia, marks a large joint achievement of Albanians in Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and other areas where they lived and appeared identifying. This was done by the center, namely Prishtina, and a common educational, cultural, scientific concept that pervaded them, especially after the decisions of the 9th Congress of CLY in March 1969 when conclusions were passed for the advancement of the position of nationalities and advancing Kosovo’s position in the Yugoslav federation.

These developments, moving towards a common Albanian identity in Yugoslavia, with Kosovo as a reference, were moving in an unstoppable flow, despite repeated reactions

¹⁹⁸⁵ See the Joint Platform of CC of CLY of the 10th Congress of CLY in Belgrade, August 1974, “Komunist”, Prishtinë, 1974.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Idem.

from Belgrade, such as those coming from Serbian academics around Cosić,¹⁹⁸⁷ and also around a Serbian political spectrum, which came out with the “*Blue Book*” in 1979 with some “spice” from the underground Macedonian nationalism, where many of Belgrade’s actions against Albanians and Kosovo had to be tested,¹⁹⁸⁸ to which a “diplomatic” response was given by Tito himself.¹⁹⁸⁹

The common Albanian cultural space in the Prishtina-Skopje relations, as determined by the dynamics of Kosovo, was enriched with publications of Albanian authors in the fields of literature, whose works, mostly published by “Rilindja” of Prishtina and those from Skopje’s “Flaka e Vëllazërimit” filling the common bookstore networks, libraries, and all bookstores in both parts.

However, the rails of economic, educational and cultural cooperation with Macedonia lay in political commitments, which brought about the constitutional changes of the early sixties and those of the seventies, which were followed by frequent restraining reactions from Belgrade and their co-thinkers in the ranks of Macedonian politics linked to the common interest of anti-Albanian policies trying to prevent this development with the abhorrence of “irredentism” and later “separatism” produced by the demands for the Republic of Kosovo in the Yugoslav federation. It should be emphasized that an important role was played by the then political class in Kosovo as well as the Albanian intelligence on both sides grasping the historic moment for the changes brought by this development to be used to advance social and political status in all areas of institutional life in order to be ready to face the challenges that come from the biological ticking of the Tito era, which, as will be seen, will highlight the “old” anti-Albanian recipes although they will result in the destruction of Tito’s Yugoslavia.

Aware of this inevitable development and the responsibility it had against it, the Kosovo political class led by Fadil Hoxha, Veli Deva, and Mahmut Bakalli, was directly committed to the new climate created after the Brioni Plenum in June 1966, hence to be utilized in two compatible tracks of historical importance: in the political one – so that the constitutional position of Kosovo, starting with the constitutional amendments of 1968, be promoted to a federal unit, as will actually happen with the amendments to the 1974 Constitution gaining the status of an equal unit in the Yugoslav federation, a position sanctioned by Article 1 of the Yugoslav Constitution,¹⁹⁹⁰ and on the track of cultural and educational emancipation, since the creation of institutions (University of Prishtina in Albanian language, established in 1970, scientific institutes, Kosovo Academy of Sciences,

¹⁹⁸⁷ See Dobrica Cosic’s speech at the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the CLS in June 1968 against the autonomy of Kosovo and the “creation of Albanian unitarism”, which comes from the “Albanian connection” between Prishtina and Skopje to the detriment of Serbia and the Serbian people, for what Cosic will be expelled from the Central Committee of the CL of Serbia, as well as his book “*Stvarno i moguće*” (“*Real and Possible*”), Budva, 1986, where the Serbian academic activates his attitudes of 1968, raising the “threat of Albanian nationalism” to a “platform of the Vatican and the United States against Serbia and Yugoslavia!”

¹⁹⁸⁸ A “test” of this nature that Skopje took from Belgrade, was also Limanovski’s “memorabilia” about the “Gorani” and “Torbeshi” in Dragash and elsewhere in Kosovo, whom he called “Macedonians” who the nationalist policy of Kosovo had begun to turn them “into Albanians”. Limanovski’s article was echoed in the Belgrade media, which demanded that the “Albanianization of the Gorani and Torbesh” be prevented in Macedonia. On this occasion, from Kosovo (Kosovo Academy of Sciences and the Institute of History), a response was issued to Limanovski and everything related to the campaign to prevent the free national declaration in Macedonia.

¹⁹⁸⁹ The “*Blue Book*” appeared as “part of a critical examination of a Belgrade party organization” against factors that threatened socialist and self-governing Yugoslavia, among which, the main one was the constitutional position of Kosovo within the Yugoslav federation and the consensus in it, that had to be analyzed in order for “Yugoslavia to be protected from the danger posed by separatist”! Of course, this document needed a response and Tito called a “closed” meeting in Karadjordjevo, where the political leader of Serbia was criticized “for obstruction”. Draza Markovic, one of Tito’s associates, apologized, which made the document to withdraw from further political consideration. After Tito’s death in 1980, the “*Blue Book*” was activated in many forms, to become the backbone of Milosevic’s hegemonic policy of overthrowing the autonomy of Kosovo and the Yugoslav federation. (See: Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kosova*” I-V, 2015, Book V, pp. 172-178)

¹⁹⁹⁰ Article 1 defined the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a federation consisting of six socialist republics (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina, and Kosovo). The latter are also within the RS of Serbia. (“Kushtetua e RFS të Jugosllavisë”, Prishtinë, 1974, p. 2)

Kosovo Television, the rise of “Rilindja” to the rank of one of the most powerful publishers in Yugoslavia and others), making the Albanians in Yugoslavia to be culturally and politically equal with other peoples, an equality that meant an “Albanian center”, or a “matrix” that could not be other than Prishtina.

Although Kosovo party leaders in the federal bodies (Fadil Hoxha and Veli Deva and, a little later, Bakalli) tried to bypass or even “refute” any abhorrence of Prishtina as “center of the Albanians in Yugoslavia”, in practice it was becoming such, by which Tito, Kardelj, and Bakarić tacitly agreed, as this suited their concept of a new Yugoslav federation outside Belgrade’s oversight, in which Kosovo and the Albanians played a key factor in its strategic balances at home and abroad.¹⁹⁹¹

Thus, at the Yugoslav level, in addition to the political ones (as a federal unit), with the rapid and very important cultural, intellectual, informational achievements, Prishtina had gained the reference of an equal center among eight of them in the Yugoslav federation, and whenever it was mentioned, it implied “Albanian identity”. This was reflected in almost all fields of art and creativity, whereas “Kosovafilm” produced films in Albanian language and with Albanian topics, shown in the Yugoslav competition at the Pulja festival and abroad; TV Prishtina participated in Yugoslav music festivals with Albanian singers in the Albanian language. The Albanian language was even used in the largest events in the country, including the Yugoslav political spectacle, the manifestation of May 25, when the youth relay was handed to President Tito by representatives of Kosovo with greetings in Albanian. It can be said that the Albanian language had become the official language in Kosovo and in Yugoslav relations also due to the fact that personal documents (identity cards, passports and birth certificates) were issued in the Albanian language. In these documents, Kosovo had its identification code “K”, among the eight federal units.

The reference to Kosovo as an “Albanian center”, which Tito had already converted for geostrategic and geopolitical reasons in relation to Albania and the region, had begun to be swallowed by Macedonia and even “supported” by the fact that in these important relations, “the burden of Albanianism” from Skopje was transferred to Prishtina, so that this would not hinder the “Macedonian identity”, which, if left entirely there, would turn into a “competition” that would even “dilute” it at the state level. Thus, in the following years (from 1974-1981), the political leadership of Skopje supported all cultural and especially educational agreements with Kosovo, encouraging mostly Albanian students from Macedonia to study in Prishtina (over 5 thousand with seats reserved among the 30,000 that the university enrolled) in order for the University of Skopje to maintain its “Macedonian identity”.

For Macedonia, considering the threat from an increase of Albanian intelligence there, the phenomenon of the remnants of Albanian students from Macedonia to Kosovo was welcomed after they completed their studies there, which was the most frequent case, even though it was exactly this factor that turned Prishtina into an “Albanian center” for which Albanian intellectuals from Macedonia were also interested, as it shaped the common Albanian identity in Yugoslavia, freeing them from the position of a discriminated “minority” as they had been for years in Macedonia.

¹⁹⁹¹ See: Đilas, Milovan: “Tito. Eine kritische Biographie“, Molden, Wien, 1980; Đilas, Milovan: “Jahre der Macht. Kräftespiel hinter dm Eisener Vorang: Memoiren 1945-1966“, Molden-S.Sewald, München, 1983; Strhöm, Karl Gustav: “Ohne Tito, kann Jugoslawien überleben?“, Bastei-Lübbe, Styua, Graz, Wien, Köln 1976; Bilandžić, Dušan: “Povjesti izbliza. Memoarski zapisi 1945-2005“, Zagreb,1999.

As part of the common Albanian cultural space, the culture of the Albanians in Macedonia took place in a mutual cultural and educational relations with Albania from 1968 to 1981, a development that cannot be viewed outside of Tito's strategy even in relation to Albania and its geostrategic role after its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact in 1968 on the occasion of the USSR intervention in Czechoslovakia, as both countries were equally challenged by an "internationalist" intervention by Moscow, which could have been provoked from outside.

In this regard, the first signals of a "common threat" from intervention, which could not be other than the Soviet one, to return to the Balkans, came from Albania itself. Albanian diplomats in Belgrade, in informal meetings, brought the message of the highest Albanian party and state leadership that "in the new situation created by an aggression of the USSR, the Albanian leadership estimates that the sovereignty and integrity of the PR of Albania has really been violated; that they are ready to support Yugoslavia by all means, material, moral and military in case of aggression against Yugoslavia."¹⁹⁹²

Similar messages came to Yugoslavia from Enver Hoxha himself, who in 1969, recalling the "joint struggle of the peoples of Albania and Yugoslavia against the Nazi-fascist occupier", expressed the desire "for the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia". Without delay, Tito responded in Podgorica, expressing his desire "for normalization of relations with Albania".¹⁹⁹³

The exchange of messages between E. Hoxha and Tito influenced the two countries to raise diplomatic relations to the level of ambassadors. This happened in February 1971. In July of that year, the Yugoslav government sent its ambassador, Jovo Pejčinović, to Tirana, and two months later, the Albanian ambassador, Dhimitër Lamani, arrived in Belgrade.¹⁹⁹⁴

During the reception of the Yugoslav Ambassador in Tirana, Jovo Pejčinović by the Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, the Yugoslav Ambassador was informed by the Prime Minister of Albania "that the Government of Albania no longer considers Yugoslavia as a potential threat" and that they "hope for cooperation in case of any aggression against any of the two states".¹⁹⁹⁵

Reconciliation and rapprochement messages, referring to "mutual assistance in case of external aggression" (thought to be Soviet), in Yugoslav-Albanian relations, will be made almost continuously. In 1973, during an informal meeting between the President of the Executive Council of Kosovo, Ilija Vakić, and Adil Çarçani - the Prime Minister of Albania, the latter told Vakić that "Albania is always ready to help Yugoslavia against possible threats for its independence, if necessary with the army". Enver Hoxha expressed himself similarly to Çarçani, during a speech in November 1974, condemning the doubts over "the fate of Yugoslavia after Tito".¹⁹⁹⁶

Tito, also from Prishtina, on April 4, 1975, stated that "Albania's security depends to a large extent on the security of Yugoslavia" and "good relations and cooperation with Yugoslavia, with mutual respect for the specifics of the domestic and international position." of each of the two parties

¹⁹⁹² ДАМВНР. оп.27, а.е.3225, л.204-210.

¹⁹⁹³ ДАМВНР, оп.31, а.е.3550, л.201-207 in Lita, Qerim: „Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 181-1990”, Shkup, 2014, p. 44.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Tanjug, Beograd, 6 February 1971, and 11 September 1971.

¹⁹⁹⁵ ДАРМ.1.159.236/1-10.

¹⁹⁹⁶ ДАРМ.1.159.332.29/1-12.

Tito acted in response from Prishtina on April 4, 1975, stating that “Albania’s security depends to a large extent on the security of Yugoslavia” and on the “good relations and cooperation with Yugoslavia, with mutual respect for the specifics of the domestic and international position” of each of the two parties.”¹⁹⁹⁷

It was not long before Enver issued from Tirana once again conciliatory messages to Belgrade. From the rostrum of the 7th Congress of the APL (in November 1976), E. Hoxha, this time, pointing his finger to Moscow, said:

“In case of any eventual attack by the USSR or any other force against Yugoslavia, the Albanian people will stand together with the peoples of Yugoslavia.”¹⁹⁹⁸

In this spirit appeared the main article of “*Zëri i Popullit*” (“Voice of the People”), an organ of the APL, on January 19, “Soviet-Bulgarian threats and humiliation will not succeed in the Balkans”, pointing out the following, among other things:

"We declare to the world that Albania will never allow its country to serve foreign troops as a base to attack Yugoslavia and Greece, and that we will always be on the side of the peoples of Yugoslavia and Greece in the fight for freedom, independence, and national sovereignty. Therefore, not only is there no threat from Albania, but on the contrary, we will always help them.”¹⁹⁹⁹

In the spirit of improving political and diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and Albania, in which case the messages between Tito and Enver commemorated the “golden times” of Yugoslav-Albanian cooperation 1944-1949, cultural and educational relations between Kosovo and Albania were expressions of a common desire for cooperation despite the great ideological differences that continued between the two countries and the political propaganda that Tirana maintained in relation to self-government and revisionism. The cooperation protocols signed in 1968, 1971 and 1974, focused on education, culture and sports, and even on some easy forms of trade. In these relations, Kosovo emerged as the main carrier, though there were also cultural and educational agreements between Albania and Macedonia, which usually followed those with Kosovo aimed at cultural and educational exchange between the two countries to serve common interests of the Albanians in Yugoslavia as well as their cultural and national identity, such as the Congress of standard Language in Tirana in 1972 and the acceptance of the standard of a common Albanian literary language for the entire ethnic Albanian space (in both countries). Here, too, Albanian linguists from Macedonia were part of a joint group of Albanian linguists from Yugoslavia, who were represented in Congress and helped reach a common agreement.

CHAPTER THREE

MACEDONIA AND KOSOVA 1981-1991

1981 DEMONSTRATIONS AND RETURN OF ANTI-ALBANIAN POLICY

¹⁹⁹⁷ ДАМВиР.оп.31,а.е.3550/201-207, Београд, август, 1975.

¹⁹⁹⁸ ДАРМ.1.1326.6/1-15.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Idem.

The social and political relations at the Yugoslav level brought about the constitutional changes of 1974 and the advancement of Kosovo's position in the Yugoslav federation as one of the eight equal consensual units, although significantly changed the position of the Yugoslav federation towards its transformation into a socialist self-governing society of a liberal model. However, on the political plain it was gripped by an internal stalemate, which was increasingly exacerbated by the onset of a serious illness (gangrene) that had plagued Tito since mid-1979 of which he already lay in a Ljubljana hospital, where he died on May 5, 1980.

Tito's death at an advanced age (88) also marked the beginning of the end of AVNOJ Yugoslavia, which he had set up and led for nearly four decades through a strong hand, cunningly, but also with great courage on the course of socialist self-government against the Stalinist dogma, which took another ten years of struggles to bring it down from one crisis after another to a bloody war, which, as will be seen, all had a starting point the constitutional changes of 1974 and the new relations in the federation, where Kosovo appeared as an equal unit with the others. This constitutional position, created in the political circumstances determined by Tito and his authority, will be opposed by Serbia, as well as Macedonia as its vassal. These federal units, after Tito's death, conditioned the new balance of relations in the federation with the collapse of Kosovo's subjectivity in the federation and its return under the tutelage of Serbia, where it had been from 1945 to 1968.

In this development, i.e. the decade leading to the breakdown of Yugoslavia, along with Serbia, which almost from 1976, with the "Fourth Book" had shown its option, Macedonia was the main springboard in the process. This also had its reasons, as Skopje aimed to defactorize its role in the political arena by returning Kosovo under the tutelage of Belgrade. And on the other hand, it would enable it, with the demolition of the "Albanian registry" in Prishtina, to turn the Albanian factor in Macedonia, closely linked to Prishtina, into a position of an inferior national minority with limited rights, as it were until the seventies.

But what the "*Blue Book*" and its "silent" supporters in Macedonia (Crvenkovski, Koliševski, Gligorov, and others) foresaw, however, needed a "trigger" as well as "pretexts" (possibly of "separatist" nature) or similar in which, in Kosovo, first of all, Tito and his legacy would be attacked,²⁰⁰⁰ in order to start a joint Serb-Macedonian war against Kosovo and the Albanians, that is, starting a Macedonian revenge against Kosovo and the Albanians, in the name of "defending Yugoslavia"!

And, an ideal ground for this was found in the demonstrations of 1981, which erupted on March 11 in Prishtina and continued on March 26, April 1 and 2, and almost continuously during that "hot" spring in Kosovo.

Although the students' demonstrations in Prishtina appeared "without an organizational address" and without bearers,²⁰⁰¹ and that, days later, various groups and

²⁰⁰⁰ Vllasi, Azem: "*Kosova: fillimi që nuk harrohet*", Prishtinë, 2017, p. 264.

²⁰⁰¹ Although the Prishtina courts, during October-December 1981, convicted a significant number of demonstrators (over 150 with prison terms of three to seven years), as well as members of several organizations (mostly Marxist-Leninist), for throwing banners and similar, however, the trials did not produce a joint council of demonstrations and demands. Even the so-called "group of students of the University of Prishtina" was attributed to the participation in the organization and not the program concept. In this spirit were the numerous convictions and trials that took place during 1981, 1982, and 1983, which were mainly related to participation in demonstrations, even in an organized manner, labeled "Marxist-Leninist" by certain groups by the demand for the Republic. of Kosovo. However, various authors dealing with the issue of the destruction of the former Yugoslavia as well as its real causes and not with the factors found and involved in the process, (Viktor Meier: "*Wie Jugoslawien verspielt wurde*", 1995; Pirjevac, Jože: "*Tito i drugovi*", Zagreb, 2012; Milosavljević, Olivera: "*Činjenice i tumačenja. Dva razgovora sa Latinkom Perović*", Beograd, 2000; Libal, Wolfgang: "*Das ende Jugoslawiens*", Wien, 1991; Glenny, Misha: "*The fall of Yugoslavia*", London, 1992, etc.), on the basis of indications, cast doubt on Moscow and its agencies in Serbia (related to the Serbian unitary policy of the highest levels), on the fact that they were interested in achieving two goals by igniting the conflict in Kosovo: overthrowing Tito's Yugoslavia (socialist self-government), by which the model of Soviet dogmatism would take its place, as well as creating the circumstances for the USSR, in accordance with the doctrine of limited sovereignty proclaimed by Brezhnev, on any formal call that would come from Belgrade, to intervene

organizations were incorporated in it, mainly Marxist-Leninist, where, in addition to the demand for the Republic of Kosovo, ideological tracts were distributed similar to those of the Tirana arsenal against socialist self-government and the like,²⁰⁰² however, the approach and assessment of them was made more rapidly by the Yugoslav party and state bodies at the highest levels, especially their assessment as “hostile” of a counter-revolutionary character.²⁰⁰³ This showed that Prishtina’s demonstrations were not only an expression of “students dissatisfaction with food and housing conditions”, but rather that they were organized mainly for political purposes, indicating that Tito’s Yugoslavia was coming to an end. On one hand, the deposition of the Albanians’ demand for the Republic of Kosovo (or even of the Albanians in Yugoslavia) appeared as a condition for its survival, and on the other, the Belgrade course appeared, initially under the slogan of “protection” of Yugoslavia, which was conditioned by the overthrow of Kosovo’s autonomy and its return “under Serbian sovereignty” from which it allegedly “was violently separated by constitutional changes of 1974”, after which a strengthened Serbia would come out - a model for the unitary-centralist state under Belgrade’s leadership.

The then Yugoslav political and state authorities, under pressure from Serbia and Macedonia in the role of a veritable vassal of Belgrade, including the “western” part (Croats and Slovenes who had special interests in this development and expected benefits), were not able to accept even a primary fact, that the further holding together of Yugoslavia depended, if not on the increase of its status to that of the Republic, as demanded by the Albanians, then the preservation of its constitutional position of 1974, nor the second fact, which came from Serbia in an ultimate form - that the preservation of Yugoslavia depended on constitutional changes which were conditional on the return of Kosovo under Serbian sovereignty.

This discourse, dominating Yugoslav politics in the form of a chronic crisis over the next eight years, will turn Kosovo and its cause into an arena where a battle took place between those seeking to take advantage of it for their own purposes (Croats and Slovenes) to pursue national interests until secession, as will actually happen in 1991, and others (Serbs and Macedonians) who sought to promote a unitary Yugoslav model by their attitude towards Kosovo (bringing down its autonomy) that even in the circumstances of eventual reforms (of Croatia and Slovenia exiting), to appear as Serbian Yugoslavia. Maintaining the format of the Yugoslav state, Belgrade aimed at remaining a regional power, for which, in order to maintain the geostrategic and geopolitical balance, the Europeans, the Americans and the Soviets (Russians) would necessarily agree.

to “calm down the situation” in Yugoslavia. According to this scenario, the USSR, which had set up “Marxist-Leninist committees” in many Yugoslav centers and one of them, the “Bar Committee”, led by several university professors, had been condemned in 1974 precisely because they appeared as “Moscow’s Stalinist vanguard” trying to return to its sphere of interest both Yugoslavia and Albania, which would somehow be involved in the conflict. This would pave the way for the return of Albania to the Warsaw Pact with Yugoslavia in it. These and similar assessments, however, remain at the level of assumptions and indications until the archives of the military intelligence services of NATO, CIA, the Soviet KGB, the Yugoslav KOS, and others, are opened.

²⁰⁰² In the first information disseminated by the Yugoslav government, Albania appeared “inspiring” of the demonstrations. For this, the slogans of the Leninist-Marxist groups known from the propaganda arsenal of Tirana of Stalinist content and those against the Yugoslav self-government were used. This led to the immediate cessation of Kosovo’s cultural and educational cooperation with Albania, even though no credible international source confirmed Albania’s fingers in the Prishtina demonstrations. This is also what Tirana said in its first commentary appearing in “*Zëri i Popullit*”, on April 9, 1981, in which case the demonstrations and the just demand for the Republic of Kosovo were supported, but any interference of Albania in these developments was denied. Ramiz Alia even admitted that Albania itself was surprised by the outburst of demonstrations in Prishtina. (See: Shala, B - Halili, L, and Reka, H: “*Unë, Ramiz Alia dëshmoj për historinë*”, Prishtinë, 1992, p. 89).

²⁰⁰³ See the positions of the two Yugoslav presidencies (state and party) based on the conclusions of the Federal Council for the Protection and Constitutional Regulation of the SFRY on April 23, 1981, published in the “*Politika*” of Belgrade on April 24, 1991.

Belgrade's open calculation, which was welcoming for Skopje, would be based on the assessment, by both Yugoslav leaderships (state and party) and the Yugoslav Army, that the demonstrations of Kosovo, on the platform of the demand for the Republic of Kosovo, to be regarded as "hostile events" of "counter-revolutionary background", just as they were assessed in 1968 and all other developments that brought about the 1974 Constitution, as mentioned in the "Blue Book" in 1976, as it was soon to happen. The first qualification "*hostile demonstrations*" - opened the possibility for a revenge or bloc against the just political demands of the Albanians for raising their status in the federation, which excluded the possibility that the demonstrations in Prishtina served any reason that the preservation of Tito's Yugoslavia (on any suggestion from abroad) was to be done through the continuation of the constitutional reforms from 1974, where the advancement of Kosovo's status in the republic created circumstances for further stabilization.²⁰⁰⁴ While the "*counter-revolutionary background*" from the position of "Albanian irredentism" - enabled the obliteration of the achievements of Albanians in Kosovo so far, but also in Macedonia and other Albanian areas in Yugoslavia, especially those in terms of education and culture, for which Macedonia was very interested hoping it could exclude Albanians there to preserve the Macedonian character of the state created by Tito in the assembly of ASNOM in 1944.²⁰⁰⁵

In this regard, of great interest for both Serbia and Macedonia seemed to be taking revenge, on the one hand against Kosovo Albanian politicians, especially against Tito's associates (Fadil Hoxha and Mahmut Bakalli with increasing influence in Yugoslav politics) who had contributed to the advancement of Kosovo's constitutional position on an equal unit of the Yugoslav federation, of which they had been condemned and attacked from all sides, and on the other hand, revenge against Albanian intellectuals - inspiring awareness of equality and national emancipation on which the demand for the Republic of Kosovo in the Yugoslav federation had been raised. This revenge meant also a war against national institutions²⁰⁰⁶

²⁰⁰⁴ According to the well-known German publicist, Viktor Meier (author of the book "*Wie Jugoslawien verspielt wurde*"), speaking in Bonn on November 22, 1995, at a public forum in WDR on the causes of the Yugoslav crisis, advancing Kosovo's status as a republic would stabilize Yugoslavia, an issue that was expected to occur in the event of future constitutional changes, in favor of which Kardelj had expressed himself on the occasion of their adoption in 1974. But Tito's death had removed this from the agenda, although some of the well-known European Social Democrat leaders (Willy Brandt, H. Schmit, and others) had repeatedly advised the Yugoslav leader not to part with this option despite the objections warned by the Serbian leadership in Belgrade in the "*Blue Book*". According to Meier, Tito's collaborator, Vladimir Bakaric, during meetings with world-renowned leaders, had openly expressed concern that with Tito's death, his concept of a federal Yugoslavia of eight equal units was dying, because "someone" and "something" had an already open scenario to ignite Yugoslavia in Kosovo. Bakaric expressed his suspicions about the organization of demonstrations by professional services from abroad in a letter he sent to L. Mojsov on September 29, 1981 on the occasion of the drafting of the "*Political Platform for Kosovo*", in which case he opposed the assessment that "Marxist-Leninist groups" were behind them, although they appeared in demonstrations. "I am not sure that the organizer of the demonstrations should be sought there (in Marxist-Leninist groups). Demonstrations have been conducted in such a professional way that no such groups can organize them." (See V. Bakaric's letter: AS.1589.teh-eno.1470-Kosovo, 1981). According to Azem Vllasi, the well-known communist leader of the "Titoist" line, who initially supported the Yugoslav course of ideo-political differentiation in Kosovo, but later, will oppose Milosevic at a stage when he was getting ready to overthrow Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, for which he will be imprisoned, it was precisely certain Serbian circles who found it convenient that immediately after Tito's death something anti-Yugoslav happened in Kosovo and against Tito. According to Vllasi, "such a thing would arouse anti-Albanian sentiment in other parts of Yugoslavia as well. This is exactly what the Serbian nationalist circles wanted." (See: "*Kosova: fillimi qe nuk harrohet*", Prishtinë, 2017, p. 264).

²⁰⁰⁵ Ströhm, Karl Gustav: "*Ohne Tito, kann Jugoslawien überleben*", Graz, Köln, Wien, 1976.

²⁰⁰⁶ Although the definition of "*national institutions*" for the University of Prishtina, the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, as well as the Institutes (Albanological and History), was not in the administrative or political vocabulary of Kosovo and was even permanently omitted by pointing out "Kosovo's educational and cultural institutions" serving the "socialist self-government emancipation and equality", it will, however, appear in the Political Platform for Kosovo of the two Presidencies (state and Party), which will be approved in the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CLY in October 1981 to destroy the cultural, educational basis of Kosovo's political emancipation that led to national equality within the Yugoslav

(University of Prishtina, Academy of Sciences of Kosova, Institute of History of Kosovo, Albanological Institute and, particularly “Rilindja” and the rest of this awareness), which had served to display the spiritual identity of the Albanians in Yugoslavia, associated with Prishtina and Kosovo as its center.

Belgrade's anti-Albanian policy, to which Macedonia will join with great commitment, was developed on two plains:

- that of ruining Kosovo's relations with the Yugoslav federation, turning it under the tutelage of Serbia, mainly with political views of the highest party and state forums for the “hostile” character of the demand for the Republic of Kosovo and “from the positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentism”, and

- that of Macedonia acting for the destruction of the position of the Albanians in this republic, which also, by the 1974 Constitution, as a nationality, became part of the state sovereignty.

Thus, the pressure put on Kosovo by the federation and Serbia, opened the possibility for the Macedonian political leadership to use the abomination of “Albanian nationalism and irredentism” to settle accounts with all that the Albanians had achieved with great effort since the Brioni Plenum of 1966 onwards in education, culture, economy, and political representation at the republican and federal levels.

In this regard, the party and state conclusions of the highest level, in which the demands of Albanians for equality related to the Republic of Kosovo and national identity were qualified as “hostile”, opened the possibility of rehabilitation of anti-Albanian policy, which was assessed by the Brioni Plenum as “discriminatory to Albanians”, for which, even symbolically, party and legal measures were taken against the perpetrators. In the new circumstances, with the amenity of the highest state formations and the qualifications deriving from them, the anti-Albanian policy, returned to an even harsher form. Therefore, it was no coincidence that in Macedonia, “in search of perpetrators of hostile activity”, many of those who in the fifties and sixties had gone to prison under the charge of “Albanian nationalism” were targeted by political and criminal prosecution, or in search of “hostile groups seeking unification with Kosovo”, including anyone related to the NDSH and its program for national unification, manifested in Skopje in 1945, widespread in Kosovo, for which in the processes of 1945, 1946 and 1947 many of the Albanian intellectuals who belonged to this organization were imprisoned and sentenced to long imprisonment and executions.²⁰⁰⁷

Under the condemnation that “Albanian nationalism and irredentism was like water that never sleeps”, the Macedonian revenge against the Albanians, appearing as a permanent “natural repressive state” extended and affected all spheres of life and social structures (education, culture, economy, and others), in order to stop the flow. Thus, in addition to the teachers who were mostly charged with “the guilt of Albanian irredentism”, the target of repression targeted also students and young people who had studied in Kosovo and had become

federation in accordance with the 1974 constitution. This definition also served the process of ideo-political differentiation to overthrow the intellectual professional structure of Kosovo institutions at all levels of education, culture and information.

²⁰⁰⁷ Along with the NDSH, founded in Skopje in 1945, which had in its program the Albanian Democratic Union, which spread to Kosovo and whose activity continued until 1947, when its leaders were imprisoned and convicted with heavy prison terms, with six of them being executed, in 1958, a similar party was reactivated in Macedonia, demanding the unification of the Albanian territories of Macedonia with Kosovo.

part of the common Albanian identity, although with this, from 1969 to 1981, Macedonian politics also consented.

This repressive policy, operationalized in accordance with Belgrade's actions at the federal and Serbian levels in Kosovo, returning to Kosovo through political and illegal decrees - in the form of a "silent coup" – deciding on everything in the federation will be led by the representatives of Macedonia: Lazar Koliševski - member of the Presidency of the SFRY, Lazar Mojsov - chairman of the Central Committee of the CLY, Stojan Niševski - Vice President of the Assembly of Yugoslavia, and some other, will be assisted by Krste Crvenkovski and Kiro Gligorov - active in almost all the committees set up to deal with Kosovo's issue.

Of course, Lazar Koliševski, an early Macedonian cadre trained in Serbia from before the war onwards, always ready to remain under the armpit of Belgrade, was put in charge of the destructive actions against the Albanians in Yugoslavia. As a member of the Presidency of the SFRY and at the same time a member of the Federal Council for the Protection of the Constitutional Rule, he gave formal support to the anti-constitutional campaign with which Kosovo was being deprived of many of the competencies provided by the Constitution of 1974. The meeting of April 23, 1981 was decisive, in which the Council unconstitutionally approved the "package of measures for the constitutional protection of the country". They were approved at the meeting of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the CLY on April 29, receiving green light, although some of them were already being implemented prior to these decisions the day after the eruption of demonstrations.

As unconstitutional positions, approved by the Presidency of the Central Committee of the CLY, after their implementation had begun, were the order for the introduction and use of federal police units in Kosovo, which abolished the Kosovo Police Service, as well as the decision that YPA units in Kosovo, sent there without an official declaration of a state of emergency by the SFRY Presidency, by which Kosovo was "silently" placed under a military regime similar to that of the year 1945.

With this coup action, not only was the Territorial Defense of Kosovo abolished, whereas its structures (the 50 thousand strong reserve units) were placed under the command of the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army), but also the overall political and institutional life was subjected to the pressure of the military presence.

Another devastating decision emerging from these conclusions to which Koliševski committed himself with great dedication, had to do with the review (unilateral termination) of the SFRY relations with Albania. This forum came out with the decision to withdraw the hospitality of the Albanian ambassador to the SFRY under the argument of "his involvement in internal affairs". A complete ban on further engagement of professors from Albania for the engaged in lectures at the University of Prishtina and other schools was also requested. On the occasion, the use of literature from Albania and an immediate cessation of cultural exchanges with Albania were also demanded.²⁰⁰⁸

The Koliševski-Mojsov twosome in the Yugoslav state and party leadership defined the dynamics of these actions, to make them look like actions of the Yugoslav leadership, although it was known that behind them stood the Serbian political and military factor already in their service in Kosovo carrying out the coup against Yugoslavia. Since the party was the main political force of the country leading the main processes, it was expected that Lazar Mojsov, in

²⁰⁰⁸ "Politika", Beograd, 24 April 1981.

the capacity of Chairman of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the CLY, would request the formation of a joint commission of the Central Committee of the CL of Kosovo, and the Central Committee of the CL of Serbia with the task of “ascertaining the party responsibility of Mahmut Bakalli”.

Thus, the party commission headed by Mojsov, in addition to warning that the CLY was no longer a party in line with the spirit set by Tito, but rather a new ideological coup in the hands of the Belgrade unitarians, actually marked the beginning of Serbian and Macedonian revenge against Mahmut Bakalli, as a collaborator and confidant of Tito in the crucial years of Yugoslavia’s political and social reforms, leaving almost everyone behind. And, also it represented revenge against the CL of Kosovo, which for years communicated with the organization of Serbia at the level of an equal partner at the Presidency of the Central Committee of the CLY, turning the party line of the communists of Kosovo dominated by Albanians into a political pragmatism in the service of advancing the position of Kosovo at the level of the Yugoslav federation, but also creating an awareness of institutional equality through cultural and educational institutions, such as the University of Prishtina, Kosovo Academy of Sciences, “Rilindja”, RTV of Kosovo, and others.

Bakalli’s condemnation paved the way for the party to be “cleansed” from within to give way to “loyal cadres conscious of Yugoslav patriotism” (actually cadres of Serbia), many of whom were said to have been ousted by “Bakalli and his Gjakovan clique” for years.²⁰⁰⁹ This action created suitable conditions for the removal and elimination of “irredentist” and “nationalist” intellectuals, who had “occupied” the main institutions of education and culture (University, media, publishing houses, and else).

The commission for the party responsibility of M. Bakalli, although “joint” between the Provincial Committee of the CL of Kosovo and the Central Committee of the CL of Serbia, in accordance with the new relation of forces that Belgrade had begun to establish by force, was more of an almost police and little or not at all “party” investigation, as it was said, in which the settling of accounts with Bakalli was a direct settling of accounts with Tito’s course for raising Kosovo’s position in the Yugoslav federation as an equal unit and removing it from influence of Belgrade, where it had been from 1945 onwards, although the Yugoslav party leadership hypocritically kept the slogan: “After Tito – Tito”.

The investigative commission, which worked during June, “seeks to clarify the facts related to the personal responsibility of Mahmut Bakalli for the political situation in the League of Communists of Kosovo, as it was said, for the mistakes and omissions that led to the

²⁰⁰⁹ “*The Gjakova Clique*” - was a divisive “anathema” among Albanians, launched in Kosovo by certain Serbian circles in Belgrade after the Brioni Plenum of 1966, on allegedly “the role of the main Kosovar leaders originating from Gjakova” (F. Hoxha, X. Nimani, and his brothers, Y. Pula, V. Deva, X. Hamza, M. Bakalli, P. Nushi, and others) to economically “stimulate Gjakova and the surrounding towns” to the detriment of “villages” and “peasantry”. This abhorrence gained its “platform” in the series of articles on “The truth about Kosovo”, by Dr. Halit Tërnavci, a professor at the University of Belgrade, published in several sequels in the Belgrade “Politika”, in which he targeted F. Hoxha, Bakalli, and all those who “had divided Kosovo on a town-village basis!” Prof. H. Tërnavci, strongly accused F. Hoxha, Bakalli and others from the “Gjakova clique” of having brought “grandchildren and relatives at the head of educational and cultural institutions”. Here was mentioned the rector Gazmend Zajmi (grandson of X. Nimani), Academic Ali Hadri, who for Tërnavci was “the main inspirer of Albanian nationalism” (according to him the relative of F. Hoxha, although this was not true and he was not from Gjakova, but Peja) and many others. It did not take long before they were dismissed from their posts, subject to ideo-political differentiation as well as threats of prosecution. Halit Tërnavci’s “platform” served several similar careerists in Kosovo, especially those whom the “Gjakova clique” had removed or dismissed from the leadership of Kosovo from 1996-1981, “inactivating” them in the federation precisely because they had hindered the advancement of Kosovo’s position in the federation (A. Shukriu, S. Hasani, K. Shiroka, and others), who were quickly reactivated in the service of Belgrade in the long ideo-political differentiation process in Kosovo, who as “loyal” to Belgrade, took the lead of overthrowing Kosovo’s autonomy on March 23, 1989.

outbreak of great-Albanian nationalism and irredentism and counter-revolutionary demonstrations in the Province”,²⁰¹⁰ in which case Bakalli was “blamed” for “one of his most unforgivable mistakes that as Chairman of the Provincial Committee had not insisted on building and implementing a strong ideo-political platform in the fight against nationalism”, and that “omissions were made possible by his liberal and fluctuating attitudes towards the visible manifestations of Albanian nationalism and irredentism”, by what, “avoiding the war against nationalism, underestimating the seriousness of the appearance of nationalism, failing to inform the bodies of CLS and CLY about those appearances, he has greatly influenced their spread”,²⁰¹¹ proving thoroughly that in Kosovo, practically, the war for the overthrow of the model of Tito’s Yugoslavia had begun, started in 1966 and established in 1974, although everything was allegedly done in the name of its protection.

The proposal of the Commission that M. Bakalli be expelled from the Provincial Committee of CL of Kosovo, though remaining in the party by reasoning that “he should be offered a chance so that with his behavior and work in the next period he fulfills his critical and self-critical stance” was the model of a party under the full influence of Belgrade’s unitarists and nationalists for the redefinition of Yugoslavia into a state according to the Serbian format and by no means otherwise.

Of course, for Belgrade and those behind the “Blue Book”, this war had to start in Kosovo and continue at the federal level. Its arsenal (the fight against “irredentist” intellectuals and “their space” - institutions, schools, media, and others), was envisaged as a permanent scaling campaign through the process of ideo-political differentiation emerging from “*CLY political platform in the development of socialist self-government, brotherhood, unity, and coexistence in Kosovo*”.²⁰¹²

RETURN OF REVENGE AGAINST ALBANIANS

The response of the Yugoslav state after the outbreak of the March and April demonstrations in Prishtina and other parts of Kosovo opened a new chapter of anti-Albanian policy at the level of Yugoslavia. Serious qualifications of demonstrations “as hostile” from “positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentism”, and the measures undertaken by the Presidency of Yugoslavia (imposing a state of emergency in Prishtina, imposing a state of crisis in Kosovo and the long-term process of ideo-political differentiation), made up the political and “legal” infrastructure for these actions, followed by numerous reprisals from imprisonment, informational conversations, dismissal, and other actions, attaining the form of an open campaign against a population that had almost been outlawed.

²⁰¹⁰ See: Arhiv Slovenije, 1589. Teh. Eno.1479. Kosovo 1981 g. “*Izveštaj Komisije Predsedništva CK SKS i PK Kosovo za utvrđivanje partiske odgovornosti Mahumta Bakalija*”, in Lita, Qerim: “*Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1981-1990*”, Shkup, 2014, p. 69.

²⁰¹¹ Idem, p. 70.

²⁰¹² The “*Platform for Kosovo*” was approved at the 20th Meeting of the Central Committee of CLY on November 17, 1981, hence the so-called “*Action Program for ideo-political differentiation*”, which for years put Kosovo under the pressure of differentiation from “positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentist”, a card blanche for the elimination and removal of Albanian intellectuals from education, culture, leading institutions and enterprises, and state administration, especially from the judiciary, police, and army. The action program also became an inquisitor of Albanian cultural and educational values, condemned “as inspiration for Albanian irredentist”, in which case a campaign “for cleansing” of textbooks, curricula, publishing activities, theaters, and cultural societies from cultural “content” began as well as the removal of “nationalist” authors from creative life.

However, the fierce fighting that began in Kosovo soon spread to other Albanian areas, Macedonia, the Presheva Valley, and Montenegro. The measures taken during the unstoppable processes of ideo-political differentiation, in fact, turned into continuous criminal prosecutions, most of which were determined by the dynamics and size of the Belgrade press, where the main word was Belgrade's "*Politika*" with its boulevardesque pamphlet ("*Ekspres Politika*"). Therefore, it is not at all surprising that from 1981-1989, in the police and investigative bodies, in various forms, about 350 thousand Albanian citizens were treated, in which case, 11 thousand people were convicted of minor offenses, while 4600 people were criminally convicted on hostile activities and counter-revolutionary association in hostile organizations.²⁰¹³

In Macedonia, anti-Albanian momentum came from Belgrade's interaction with the unitary policy of the course against Tito's Yugoslavia, which sought to destroy Kosovo's constitutional and institutional identity as soon as possible, and thus everything Albanian taking place under the "umbrella" of "restoring coexistence" and "brotherhood-unity" emerging from the party platform and other unconstitutional decisions of the Yugoslav Presidency and other federal bodies (the Federal Assembly and the Federal Executive Council). And it came from the well-known anti-Albanian course of the early fifties to the mid-sixties, when after the Brioni Plenum Macedonia was forced to give up discrimination against Albanians and change significantly by improving their situation on the social, political, and especially educational and cultural plain, as reflected in the opening of high schools in the Albanian language, expansion of information and publishing activity in the Albanian language, in which case educational and cultural cooperation with Kosovo played an important role in raising of the consciousness of Albanians on a Yugoslav scale.

Initial anti-Albanian measures in Macedonia began after the introduction of the "*Political Platform for Kosovo*" by the Central Committee of the CLY in October 1981, although this anti-party document did not even have full approval of high party forums and was even opposed by Tito's first collaborator, V. Bakarić, an issue that remained deliberately silenced.²⁰¹⁴

Despite this, the anti-Albanian campaign in Belgrade were given the main impetus by Macedonian leaders in the federation L. Koliševski, L. Mojsov, S. Nandov, and others, who practically became spokespersons for Serbian unitary policy in relation to Kosovo and to other parts of Yugoslavia as well (Slovenia and Croatia), of which they thought was the right time and the right circumstances.

Viewed from the historical point of view of the emergence of the Macedonian state within the Yugoslav federation and the constant claims that Albanians are denied their historical ethnicity with roots in antiquity as well as spiritual and national identity, the phenomenon of recycling revenge after short-term situations stands out following short-term "normalcy", when Albanians in the circumstances of the invading Slavic-communist realities, tried to at least recover somewhat. Such was the revenge of the years 1944-1945 "against the

²⁰¹³ More about state repression in Kosovo during 1981-1989 see Zülch, Tilan: "*Etničko čišćenje, Genocid za Veliku Srbiju*", Sarajevo, 1996, pp. 157-176.

²⁰¹⁴ Vladimir Bakarić, Tito's close collaborator from the first days when the concept of AVNOJ Yugoslavia was created in 1943, opposed the "*Political Platform for Kosovo*". In an open letter to Lazar Mojsov on September 29, 1981, Bakarić criticized the platform's drafters on almost all of its main points, calling it an "*inappropriate and even harmful*" document, because it not only fails to determine the causes and factors that led to the demonstrations in Prishtina, but it addresses them incorrectly, precisely in the CLY policy on equality, which gains the conviction that "excessive equality has turned Albanians to an irredentist and hostile course"! Therefore, according to Bakarić, "*the cure for Kosovo is not to reduce the number of students and similarly, which is impossible, but rather to restore their trust in Yugoslavia to its territory through the implementation of self-government in a consistent and fundamental way.*" In this respect, Bakarić, on Point 3, is even more direct when he says that "*most believe that the granting of more rights than they deserve according to the Constitution encouraged nationalism and these incidents. This is not the same. If that attitude created nationalism, then the main issue is to return the situation to the constitutional framework with appropriate legal measures. If it is the opposite, then the main question should be asked about the provision of national rights and the rights of nationalities, what we need.*" (For the entire text of the letter see Lita, Qerim: "*Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1818-1990*", Shkup, 2014, pp. 203-205).

Quislings and anti-communists” directed against the national resistance at a high blood price for which the Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Albanian partisans were jointly used. The second appeared in the years 1949-1966 - after the breakdown of ideological relations between Yugoslavia and Albania with the emigration to Turkey and others. While the third is presented from 1981-1991, aimed at the final defactorization of Albanians in the process of state building in Macedonia, which came after the break-up of Yugoslavia.

If it can be said that during the first revenge the Macedonians had allied with the Yugoslav communist state and the communist state of Albania acting together, while during the second revenge they did not have E. Hoxha’s Albania, but rather the Yugoslav unitarism led by Belgrade, during the last act of revenge, they were practically put in the role of vassals of Serbia against Kosovo and against the Albanians in general. By this, they were also put in the service of the overthrow of Tito’s Yugoslavia, exactly what in the ASNOM Assembly of August 1944 created a state out of political decisions.

Common between the first and the last revenge, appeared the component of “hostile activity from the positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentism”, the background of which was based on “counter-revolution” and “counter-revolutionaries”, although the first was related to the ideas of the great-Albanian ideas, as they were called, represented by the NDSH and the Albanian nationalists who opposed the Slav-communist reoccupation, while the new “counter-revolutionaries” related to the demand for the Republic of Kosovo within the Yugoslav federation, a demand deemed “hostile”, even though it relied on democratic law and equality as a civilizing right.

In this regard, Macedonian politicians loyal to Belgrade felt even more motivated against the demand for the Republic of Kosovo and the awareness of equality that had already been created among Albanians in Macedonia and elsewhere, as they believed that its demolition prevented possible options for Albanian unification in a common Yugoslav republic, which could emerge in accordance with the different scenarios of the international factor if the common Yugoslav state entered into a crisis from which it cannot emerge and the like, a scenario that could cost the extinction of Macedonia from the state map, in which it had already appeared as a political construct of Tito within the federal Yugoslavia of AVNOJ.

Therefore, if Belgrade’s anti-Albanian policy was constantly nurtured by the hegemonic concepts of historical “conjured up right”, where Kosovo appeared as “medieval Serbian cradle”, for which, according to the last Memorandum of Serbian Academics, it had to maintain its (Serbian) Yugoslavia platform, which would replace Tito’s platform,²⁰¹⁵ Skopje’s Macedonian policy was supported by the fear that the Republic of Kosovo might bring to an end Tito’s Macedonian state.

This “difference”, in fact, appeared as a common denominator, which on one hand motivated the feeling of “Serbian revival”, to take advantage of the “opportune moment of history”,²⁰¹⁶ brought about after Tito’s death in 1980 and the Kosovo demonstrations of 1981, and the “feeling of Macedonian fear” to the point of phobia from an “Albanian awakening” centered in Kosovo,²⁰¹⁷ which had to be prevented at all costs and by all means, especially the political stances that emerged in 1981, in the “name of defending” Yugoslavia from “Albanian nationalism and irredentism”, sanctioned by the “Political Platform for Kosovo” by the Central Committee of the CLY in October 1981, turning into operational programs.

Thus, the anti-Albanian hysterical campaign in Macedonia began immediately after the approval of the “Political Platform for Kosovo” and as such remained open until the destruction of Yugoslavia. In the ten-year period, all attention was focused on the destruction of Albanian education in Macedonia, in which case Albanian teachers were targeted by the

²⁰¹⁵ “*Memorandumi i Akademisë së Shkencave dhe të Arteve të Serbisë*”, 1986, “Delo”, Ljubljana, 1986.

²⁰¹⁶ Ćosić, Dobrica: “*Stvaro i moguće*”, Budva, 1987.

²⁰¹⁷ Ströhm, Karl Gustav: “*Ohne Tito, kann Jugoslawien überleben?*”, Bastei-Lübbek, Styua, Graz, Wien, Köln, 1976; Meier, Viktor: “*Wie Jugoslawien verspielt wurde*”, 1995.

party bodies (continuous ideo-political differentiation in education), but also by the administrative-police ones.²⁰¹⁸

They were followed by other measures against Albanian education: the renaming of Albanian schools bearing the names of Albanian national figures; withdrawal from the use of thousands of books and publications in the Albanian language;²⁰¹⁹ changing the curriculum for primary and secondary schools in the Albanian language in the subjects of Albanian history, language and literature and music; closing of Albanian language classes in vocational high schools and closing of gymnasium classes²⁰²⁰ and ultimately the opening of the so-called ‘mixed classes’, with teaching taking place in the Macedonian language.²⁰²¹

A special chapter in Skopje’s campaign against Albanian education and culture was the issue of preventing and reducing the number of Albanian students in Macedonia and the termination of their enrollment at the University of Prishtina, already considered “the center of Albanian irredentism and nationalism”.²⁰²²

This was reflected in the next academic year (1981/82) when the number of Albanian students at the Pedagogical Academy and the Faculty of Philology in Skopje was halved from 2,365 to 1,300.²⁰²³

The declining trends of Albanian students at the University of Skopje continued in the following years. The “moral-political criteria” during the registration also had a great influence here, a criterion that went through party and police files.

Except for Skopje, the number of Albanian students was significantly reduced at the University of Prishtina. In the academic year 1982/83, the number of Albanian students from Macedonia, out of 1,100 per year (according to the quotas set for Albanian students from Macedonia), dropped to 220 to decrease from year to year. This was also due to the fact that the University of Prishtina, under the pressure of political measures, was forced to significantly reduce the quota for Albanian students from Macedonia and other areas from 1500 per year to a total of 300.²⁰²⁴

In addition to education and culture, as well as discrimination in employment, state administration and the economy, state repression against Albanians in Macedonia included other areas of social life, which affected but also denied the character of the demographic expression of their ethnicity. This was reflected in the law on naming toponyms as well as their official use only in the Slavic version. On this occasion *Shkup* had to be written as “Skopje”, *Dibra* – “Debar”, *Manastir* – “Bitola” and so on. In this way, the Albanians, when writing, had to use only the Slavic toponyms and names of settlements. These decisions included official and

²⁰¹⁸ During the school year 1981-1982, ideo-political measures were taken against 320 Albanian teachers of which 150 were fired. (ДАРМ.1.427.525.17-249-272: Информација со оценки за активностите и преземените мерке во СКМ за спроведување на заклучоците од 9-та септември на ЦК СКЈ, in Lita, Qerim: “*Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1981-1990*”, Shkup, 2014, p. 110).

²⁰¹⁹ In 1981, 5,550 Albanian books labeled with “ideo-political inadequacy” were withdrawn from use. Idem, p. 111.

²⁰²⁰ Closing of Albanian language classes in vocational high schools took place in 1987/88.

²⁰²¹ Closing of high schools in the Albanian language and their replacement with “mixed classes” in the Macedonian language was followed by the removal of Albanian teachers and the sentencing of some of them for “hostile activities” (ДАРМ.1.427.528.31-329-333).

²⁰²² In the “*Political Platform for Kosovo*” of the Central Committee of CLY, of October 1981, the University of Prishtina is focused among the main causes of “*Albanian irredentism and nationalism*”, where the demonstrations on March 11 had not accidentally erupted. In this case, ideological differentiation to bring to justice should include not only Albanian professors who had brought indoctrination, but also students who were involved in organizing of “hostile” activities. Such should be deprived of the right to study. In Macedonia, the positions of the Political Platform were interpreted as positions for reviewing the cooperation between the University of Prishtina and that of Skopje, reducing or even terminating the enrollment of students from Macedonia to Prishtina, and above all, they became “directives” for prosecuting a large number of students from Macedonia on the grounds of participating in hostile demonstrations.

²⁰²³ ДАРМ.1.427.520.22/251-257.

²⁰²⁴ “*Rilindja*”, 1 October 1982.

administrative documents of all levels, from identity cards and other documents (passports), with residence being written only in the Slavic version. Even the Slavic version of toponyms and settlements was imposed on Radio Television of Macedonia and Radio Macedonia, in which case the speakers of the program the naming of Shkup had to pronounce as “*Skopje*”, Manastir as “*Bitola*” and so on for all the rest.²⁰²⁵

The Macedonian variant of toponyms and names, as an unprecedented form of cultural acidity in the new circumstances, had to include textbooks in the Albanian language as well as other literature published in Macedonia. These racist measures were followed by the expected reactions of Albanian intellectuals and teachers, who disagreed with this, although this prompted Macedonian officials to repress all those who opposed them, accusing them of “hostile activity from positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentism”.²⁰²⁶

Extreme anti-Albanian activity, unprecedented until then, against the Albanian identity and their existence, included the demolition of Albanian neighborhoods, bringing down the walls and fences of their houses under the pretext of “environmental unattractiveness” and cemeteries, where epitaphs had to be were written in Cyrillic letters!²⁰²⁷

This policy of a most unprecedented cultural genocide took on racist proportions with the Resolution of the Republican Assembly of Macedonia on the policy of starting a family, which prohibited the Albanian family from having more than three children!²⁰²⁸

By this resolution, even Albanian parents were forbidden to name their children with names of Albanian national character and meaning such as: Kushtrim, Liridon, Kastriot, Arbëreshë, Alban, Albana, Vlora, Shkodra, and others!²⁰²⁹

In the circumstances, as the campaign against the Albanians was taking on unprecedented racist proportions, affecting, in addition to ethnic identity, also human dignity, the response of the Albanians was natural, although not in the expected proportions.

But official Skopje was prepared to qualify the reactions of Albanians to protect their human identity as an expression of “hostile activity” from the “positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentism”. On the occasion, the individual forms of reaction were related to the activity of “hostile organizations”, mostly invented by the state police, which already specializes in fabricating “Albanian irredentists” according to well-known Belgrade scenarios, mainly related to Stalinist ideology and Enver’s Albania, for which, numerous sentences of imprisonment from one to ten years of prison were imposed.²⁰³⁰

²⁰²⁵ Lita, Qerim: “*Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1981-1990*”, Shkup, 2014, p. 113.

²⁰²⁶ Idem, p. 115.

²⁰²⁷ ДАРМ.1.1427.519.13-318-341.

²⁰²⁸ ДАРМ.1.142.45/517-547.

²⁰²⁹ ДАРМ.1.427.520.33/258-340 – Закон за изменување и дополнување на Законот за личното име, “Сл. Весник на СРМ, бр.41/85: “Article 1: On the law on personal name (Gaz, “Official of RSM” no. 30/72) Article 1, Paragraph 1, a new paragraph is added, stating: “*National names must not incite national or religious hatred, or intolerance or insult to public moral*”. Article 2: In Article 3 after paragraph 2 a new paragraph is added, which reads: “*A personal name under which the hatred or national or religious intolerance is incited cannot be registered in the birth register*”; Article 3 - in Article 8 after Paragraph 1, a new paragraph is added saying: “*The change of personal name, respectively name or surname cannot be given consent if the change incites national or religious hatred or intolerance or offends public morals.*” (See: Lita, Qerim: “*Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1981-1990*”, Shkup, 2014, pp. 113/114).

²⁰³⁰ In the period 1981-1988, Macedonian courts criminalized 37 Albanians for hostile activities, of which 113 were imprisoned, involved in various organizations considered hostile from the positions of Albanian nationalism and irredentism. Such are the organizations “*Partia Popullore e Punës*” (“*People’s Party of Labor*”), with 19 members, “*Shpella*” (“*Cave*”) of Tetova, with 77 members, 17 of them with criminal charges, “*Kushtrimi i lirise*” (“*Call to Freedom*”), members of the “*Marxist-Leninist Group of Kosovo*” and others. (See: ДАРМ.1.427.515.16/300-331, СТРОГО ПОВЕРЛИВО, ЕБ.бр.41, АНАЛИЗА, in Lita, Qerim: “*Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1981-1990*”, Shkup, 2014, p. 115).

MACEDONIA SUPPORTS MILOŠEVIĆ'S POLICY OF UNDERMINING KOSOVO'S AUTONOMY

The ten-year anti-Albanian campaign in Macedonia (1981-1991), along with the culturalist and open racism that emerged from the Resolution of the Macedonian Parliament on the policy of starting a family,²⁰³¹ in addition to open discrimination in social, political and economic life, there was a "Yugoslav" dimension to bringing down Kosovo's autonomy, which at the same time showed an almost "vital" interest in Macedonia, as Kosovo's autonomy under Serbia freed it from "the pressure" of Albanian unification in the Yugoslav space. If Koliševski, Mojsov, Andov, Crvenkovski, and others like them, ever since the outbreak of demonstrations in Prishtina, in 1981, helped by approval of party platforms and other decisions in federal forums (Party Presidency, SFRY, and the Federal Assembly) create the social, political and legal basis for an anti-Albanian campaign at all levels, Macedonia, among the first and with great commitment, joined the Milošević campaign to bring down the autonomy of Kosovo. Notably, in 1986, the SFRY Presidency, under constant pressure from Belgrade, took a stand on the constitutional changes in the Yugoslav federation, to be made in the chapter regulating economic policies setting the conditions for economic reform without affecting chapters that changed the character of the Yugoslav federation consisting of six republics and two provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo which were also within the SR of Serbia).

But, evidently, Serbia, demanding that the constitutional changes affect exactly the character of the federation, in parallel with the opening of this issue had begun preparations to create the necessary circumstances for the changes in the constitution to impose the Serbian position, to undermine through them the representation of the autonomies in the Yugoslav federation on the grounds that "Serbia should be equated with the other republics in the federation", i.e. to be represented without the provinces.

Among these "favorable circumstances" for constitutional changes, however, were those related to the policy of cadres in Kosovo, in which Fadil Hoxha's seat in the Presidency of the SFRY, was to be occupied by Sinan Hasani, while in the Party Presidency Kosovo was represented by Ali Shukriu. Both Sinan Hasani and Ali Shukriu had been among the retired politicians who, after the outbreak of the 1981 demonstrations, had supported Serbia's assessments of "the outbreak of counter-revolution" in Kosovo on the positions of "Albanian nationalism and irredentism" and the "hostile" character of the demand for the Republic of Kosovo. By defending Belgrade's positions, both of them blamed the "political leadership of Kosovo", especially F. Hoxha and M. Bakalli. Sinan Hasani had even written a book "on the genesis of the counter-revolution" in Kosovo, which he linked to "claims to a greater Albania".²⁰³²

Therefore, it was no accidental that Serbia expected S. Hasani's appointment in the Presidency of the SFRY, so that the proposal for constitutional changes, for Serbia's retaining "state identity in its entire territory", be initiated by a "representative of Albanians" of Kosovo in the state Presidency, by which, "Kosovo was returning to the political reality", thus removing the "irredentist claims, which produced demands for the Republic of Kosovo as part of the strategy for the creation of a Greater Albania", supported by Albania.²⁰³³

For more, the start of the campaign for constitutional changes in Belgrade brought to the forefront Serbian political scene, Slobodan Milošević - an extremist politician who rose to

²⁰³¹ Lita, Qerim: "Çështja shqiptare në RSFJ 1981-1990", Shkup, 2014, p. 113.

²⁰³² Hasani, Sinan: "Kosova - të vërtetat dhe mashtrimet" ("Kosovo - truths and deceptions"), Prishtinë, 1986.

²⁰³³ Đaković, Spasoje: "Sukobi na Kosovu", Beograd, 1983, pp. 123, 138, 228.

power at the head of Serbian politics thanks to the well-known nationalist course towards Kosovo, based on the notorious populist movement of Kosovo Serbs, which triggered the eighteen-month campaign for the violent overthrow of Kosovo's autonomy, to be concluded on 23 March 1989.

At the Eighth Meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Serbia, Milošević managed to create a populist atmosphere, in which he eliminated all those who did not think like him, that is, to impose on Yugoslavia the course of dictatorship of unitary and nationalistic politics by which the Yugoslav federation would be forced to accept its course. After ousting Ivan Stambolić, R. Pavlović, B. Bogdanović and others, Milošević turned to the populist movements in Kosovo, in order to impose the constitutional changes, which changed its character, that is, of the autonomous provinces "taking them back" to Serbia again, so that "it would be equal as the others". With the Kosovo Serb movement, the so-called "yogurt revolution" began, through which, in early 1988, Milošević changed political leadership in Vojvodina as well as in Montenegro, completely submitting to his populist course, and attacked Kosovo.

Of course, in this battle, well prepared by the latest Memorandum of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Serbia and with the support of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which took over the "spiritual part" of the campaign,²⁰³⁴ Milošević imposed Serbian dictatorship on Yugoslavia, which meant sacrificing the provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina), which were to be returned under its arm-pits.

In the circumstances, in addition to the puppet leadership established in Vojvodina and Montenegro, as well as the "pacification" of Bosnia and Herzegovina to maintain "neutrality" in the federation's relations that were increasingly creating a Serbian "bloc" at the SFRY Presidency, Macedonia, although "spared" by the "storm of rallies" that was destroying everything ahead, was entirely aligned with Milošević and his policy of restoring the Yugoslav federation to "Serbo-Slavia".

Here, too, for the Macedonians, Kosovo's calculus and the collapse of its autonomy played a decisive role, because in the circumstances as Milošević, through the "yogurt revolution", changed republican and provincial leadership at will, Skopje had free hands to "perfect" its anti-Albanian politics with all the means and methods that even the most destructive fantasy could allow, such as those of ethnocide that had not been seen until then in post-World War II Europe and the approval of racist laws, going as far as prohibiting Albanians from being born.

Since the populist movement of Serbs in Kosovo, Vojvodina, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, launched in the spring of 1987, had begun to worry the whole country, as well as the international community, knowing that it could not end otherwise than in the tragic war, which would soon be ignited, Macedonia used the time of war neurosis on the one hand to intensify its anti-Albanian campaign in Macedonia by all means without caring less that it could be targeted by the Yugoslav public, much less the foreign one that focused on

²⁰³⁴ The Serbian Orthodox Church was the main inspiration for the Serbian populist movement that began the overthrow of Kosovo's autonomy, as well as Tito's Yugoslavia through war. In this movement she was directly involved in marking the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, moving the ashes of Lazarus who fell in that battle throughout the "Serbian lands", from Knin through Bosnia to reach Kosovo on June 29, 1989. This campaign threatened for several months Croats, Bosniaks, Montenegrins, and especially Albanians, but nothing was done to prevent it, because everyone agreed that its "explosion" would take place in Kosovo, announced as its final destination. Indeed, on June 29, 1989, in Gazimestan, Fushë Kosovë, in the presence of the highest Yugoslav leadership, in front of a million "gatherers", brought from all over Yugoslavia, Milošević said that "through peace, but also war Serbia will be able to regain its right", that is, to take over the leadership of Yugoslavia, being promoted as the new "boss" of Yugoslav politics, but also as the instigator of the war, which will erupt five years later, which will not escape even those who watched by calculating their own accounts (Slovenes, Croats, and Bosniaks).

Milošević's actions instead, and on the other hand, to be an integral part of the actions by which Milošević had aimed at changing the Yugoslav constitution in accordance with his concept of turning the Yugoslav federation into a Serboslavia".

For Macedonia, it was important to gain "guarantees" that its constitutional position (republic in federation) would not change no matter what the future relations in it would be. And it was also important that the provinces (especially Kosovo) be deprived of representation in the federation.

Achieving these goals was of "national interest" for Macedonia, so it did not matter at all how Croats and Slovenes would be lined up, who were thinking of possibly leaving the federation, much less how other entities (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) would behave under Serbian tutelage. For Macedonia, the "guarantees" given by Belgrade that they would be protected from an Albanian "invasion" in all variants were important, even if a regional conflict was to break out.

Although it was clear that the future relations between Belgrade and Skopje, for the latter, could not be other than vassalage, the Macedonians, with their "loyal" attitude towards Serbia, from 1981 onwards, had created sufficient "capital" for to be defended by Belgrade, as the preservation of the integrity of Macedonia deprived Serbia of the possibility of eventual inclusion of Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania in this part, as well as the risk posed by the scenario for its partition.

Given this fact, as well as the role of Serbian politics dominating over the Yugoslav crisis, Macedonian politicians relied on Belgrade, convinced that it protected them in almost every variant: from that of their victory, if Yugoslavia returned into "Serboslavia", but also in the eventual defeat of Milošević, because any Serbian political turn, for geostrategic reasons in the region, would leave Macedonia untouched. This was also logical, because its fragmentation opened a new crisis, in which Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece would be involved, which, in all likelihood, would not be allowed even by the Americans, who were already closely following the developments in Yugoslavia, so that its epilogue would by no means lead it anywhere except to the Western sphere with Serbia as a regional force, or within the size of the "Belgrade Pashalik".

In this constellation, the Macedonians were determined giving their full support to Belgrade's demands for constitutional changes, even though they affected the foundations of the Yugoslav federation. Although Koliševski was no longer in key positions in the federation, however, his course, that of Crvenkovski and Gligorov, through L. Mojsov (member of the Yugoslav Presidency and chairman of the Federal Council for Defense) continued to carry on the "new" set, featuring "moderate Yugoslavs" - V. Tupurkovski and others, who, at least formally, tried to maintain some balance of interests in relation to the Slovenes and Croats.

Thus, in the divisions that had already engulfed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, with the Croatian and Slovenian representatives appearing increasingly determined that the party, as the leading power, should not give its blessing to Milošević's "Serboslavia", while the Albanian representatives (A. Vllasi and K. Jashari) were waging the last political battle for the setting "power" of "Yugoslavism" to somehow prevent the overthrow of the constitutional position of Kosovo, however, the Macedonian communists, at crucial moments, sided with of Milošević and his well-known course against Kosovo as well as against Tito's Yugoslavia. This was best seen in the demonstrations that erupted in Kosovo in mid-November

1988, demanding that the Belgrade's vassals (R. Morina, A. Shukriu, and H. Azemi), with whom Milošević, by eliminating A. Vllasi and K. Jashari from the political leadership of Kosovo, demanded bringing down Kosovo's autonomy with the "approval" that would be received from the Albanian representatives, so that before Yugoslavia and the world, which carefully followed the epilogue of these changes in Kosovo, it should all be presented as the "will of Kosovo".

Since the "will" of Kosovo appeared differently, being strongly opposed with Azem Vllasi putting into play the last card of opposition to these changes by the Albanians themselves as reflected by the strike of the "Trepça" miners in February 1989 and large demonstrations throughout Kosovo, involving over 500 thousand demonstrators, while Milošević, at the famous rally in Belgrade, in front of a million Serbs, used this to threaten Yugoslavia that "non-victimization" of Kosovo meant victimization of Yugoslavia, which all ended with the imprisonment of A. Vllasi and the announcement of the state of emergency in Kosovo, Macedonian politicians, including the "reformers" led by Tupurkovski, demanded that Kosovo's autonomy be sacrificed "to save" Yugoslavia.

After the destruction of Kosovo's autonomy at a meeting of the Kosovo Assembly on March 23, 1989, with the Yugoslav Army using tanks against demonstrators in Prishtina, Ferizaj, and other parts of Kosovo, killing dozens of young people and wounding of many more, Official Skopje, among the first, congratulated Serbia and welcomed the return of Kosovo under Serbian tutelage, calling it "an important event that restores the upset constitutional balance in the Yugoslav federation".²⁰³⁵

Unlike the opposing positions of Zagreb and Ljubljana, as well as the reactions of Slovenian and Croatian political and party leaders, that "AVNOJ's Yugoslavia was being buried in Kosovo",²⁰³⁶ and that this would in no way be accepted,²⁰³⁷ Macedonian representatives in the Yugoslav federation (SFRY and Party Presidency, and the Federal Assembly) sided with Milošević. This attitude did not change even when Milošević's army began fighting in Slovenia and Croatia, prompting the inevitable destruction of Yugoslavia, a process that would be accepted internationally at the 1991 Hague Conference.

In these equally dramatic and tragic circumstances, Macedonia continued to be on the side of Belgrade's anti-Albanian policy. In addition to supporting Milošević's provocative policies, official Skopje intensified its campaign against Albanians in Macedonia in order to exclude them from declaring independence in conjunction with Belgrade's policy. This opened a new chapter of mistrust and enmity with the Albanians in Macedonia and those in Kosovo, who, although it took ten years to turn into another war, as it happened in 2001, nevertheless did not prevent the declaration of an independent state of Macedonia for the sole reason that when Kosovo was occupied by Serbia, with Albania going through a difficult transition, a Macedonia

²⁰³⁵ "Нова Македонија", Shkup, 24 March 1989.

²⁰³⁶ "Delo", Ljubljana, March 24, 1989, from the press conference of M. Kucan. Kucan's prior statements from Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana on February 22, 1989, in solidarity with the "Trepça" miners' strike that "Yugoslavia was being defended in Trepça" are known, which served Milosevic as a pretext to unleash his "rally-mongers" to Ljubljana "to explain the truth about Kosovo", which was nothing but a "threat" to those who did not accept sacrificing Kosovo "to protect" Yugoslavia.

²⁰³⁷ "Vjesnik", 25 March, 1989, a statement by I. Racan, President of the Presidency of the Central Committee of Croatia, who, unlike Stipe Suvar, Member of the Presidency of the Central Committee of Yugoslavia from Croatia, held a "cool attitude" to the events in Kosovo, made it clear that "bringing down Kosovo's autonomy and the inferiority shown to it will have consequences not only for Kosovo, but also for others in the Yugoslav federation, because Milosevic will not stop there." This had caused Racan and Kucan, in the next Plenum of the Central Committee of the CLY, not to accept the dictatorship of Milosevic, which began the overthrow of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and with it the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia.

out of war, despite open accounts, proved useful for the issue of Kosovo and its path to secession from Serbian occupation.

CHAPTER FOUR MACEDONIA AN INDEPENDENT STATE

TURNING ALBANIANS INTO A MINORITY

The creation of the Republic of Macedonia by the Yugoslav communists at the end of World War II as well as the unilateral inclusion in the new Yugoslav federal state,²⁰³⁸ by accepting the “Macedonian people” (a conglomeration of identities from the Bulgarian, Vlach and Slavic of Orthodox Christianity affiliation),²⁰³⁹ detached it politically from the “Bulgarian option”, but not from its abomination of an “artificial creature”, placing it both from a geographical name outside the historical realities referring to antiquity, and by turning of ethnic Albanians into a minority (whose participation exceeds 30% of the total population), not including the Albanians of the Orthodox faith, with a wide range, violently assimilated into Serbs after the Serbian invasions since 1912 onwards.²⁰⁴⁰

This discourse was repeated in 1991, on the occasion of the declaration of independence by the Macedonian Parliament a state of the Macedonian nation, which, in practice, set the circumstances for an uprising that broke out in Tanusha in early 2001, as an unfinished war over an unequal state.

Indeed, the unfinished war and an unequal state highlighted the whole Albanian problem in Macedonia, where the *option of equality*, based on historical right and autochthony from antiquity onwards, emerges as a *crisis factor*, rather than the opposite. And, for the paradox to be even bigger, it is precisely the concept of equality that appears to be contradictory, because on the one hand it “conditions” the state (the Albanian option), and on the other hand, it threatens it (the Macedonian option)!

This difficult to grasp position, especially in the time of transitions that had engulfed the Eastern world, which was returning to civilized postulates with equality as the foundation of all, undoubtedly has its genesis in political discourse from the late eighties and early nineties and the spirit of hegemony over the fetish of the nation-state, emanating from the spirit of the last Memorandum of the Serbian Academics of Belgrade,²⁰⁴¹ which fueled the

²⁰³⁸ The Republic of Macedonia, which emerged from the Assembly of ASNOM in the Yugoslav federation, was admitted to the Third Meeting of the AVNOJ in Belgrade in November 1945, on the occasion of the constitution of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of six republics - federal units (Serbia, with the province of Vojvodina and the “oblast” of Kosovo, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

²⁰³⁹ Cvijić, Jovan: “*O etnografiji makedonskih slovena*“, Beograd, 1906, pp. 9-11, and Oestreich, K: “*Die Bevölkerung von Makedonien*“, at Georg. Zeitschrift, 1905, p. 285).

²⁰⁴⁰ On the Orthodox Albanians in Macedonia see for more: Cvijić, Jovan: “*O etnografiji makedonskih slovena*“, Beograd, 1906, p. 9-11; Oestreich, K: “*Die Bevölkerung von Makedonien*“, at Georg. Zeitschrift, 1905, p. 285); Schmitt, Oliver Jens: “*Kosova – historia e shkurtër e një treve qendrore ballkanike*“, Prishtinë, 2012; Prifti, Kristaq: “*Popullësia e Kosovës 1831-1912*“, Tiranë, 2014; Sinadinovski, Branislav: “*Shqiptarët ortodoks në Republikën e Maqedonisë*“, Shkup, 2015, and “*Josif Bageri – rilindësi, politikani dhe publicisti i madh shqiptar*”.

²⁰⁴¹ The last Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts appeared in the Yugoslav public opinion in November 1986. Supported by the well-known hegemonic ideas of Academician Dobrica Cosic, known for his anti-Albanian course since 1968, when he was expelled from the Central Committee of the CL of Serbia, the Memorandum, demanded that in the name of “restoring the state dignity of Serbia”, which had been taken away from it “by the autonomy of 1974”, and “considered as an artificial creature of Tito against Serbia”, Kosovo be deprived of its autonomy and together with all educational and cultural institutions (University, Academy of Arts, Rilindja, institutes) be stripped of their national character,

crisis of the joint Yugoslav federation and eventually led to its tragic and bloody destruction, which, fortunately, not only spared Macedonia, but also made it victorious, by declaring statehood, protecting it from external shocks, but not forever, despite predictions that it would be precisely Macedonia and the position of the Albanians there that would turn it into a gunpowder keg.²⁰⁴²

When mentioning the discourse of the memorandum spirit towards Albanians and their political position, however, it is precisely the approach of Macedonian politics in the process of state building to be considered, i.e. the circumstances that conditioned it, such as those that appeared with the beginning of the war in the former Yugoslavia (Yugoslav Army invasion of Slovenia in May 1991) and the holding of the Hague Conference in August 1991, in which case Yugoslavia was declared a break-up state, a process to be overseen by the Badinter Commission.²⁰⁴³

Macedonia, deliberately spared by Milošević's belligerent policy, used the opportunity to secede from the Yugoslav federation to elevate its independent state above the exclusive national concept, that is, the Macedonian one, although the ethnic and the historical realities, which were related to the Albanian factor, excluded it not only because of its participation with over 30% in the total population, but also with the current social and political status in it in accordance with the 1974 Constitution, equal to others, including the Macedonians.²⁰⁴⁴ This path, which led Macedonia to future and inevitable crises of 2001, began with the Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Macedonian Parliament on January 25, 1991.

This act was the first political step towards Macedonia's independence. On its foundations all subsequent acts of the new state were built. However, the Declaration did not express the multiethnic reality of Macedonia, as Macedonian politics began to unfold a national platform, based on a distorted historical and ethnic reality contrary to the aspirations of the Albanian people in Macedonia as a historical and cultural ethnicity rooted in antiquity, which from this point of view, emerged as the only one entitled to an historical right.²⁰⁴⁵

because they have produced nationalist indoctrination on the basis of the great Albanian ideology, which was also reflected in the "counter-revolutionary" demand for the Republic of Kosovo. The Memorandum also calls on Macedonia to "extinguish all the hotbeds of Albanian nationalism there", especially to cut off the cultural and educational ties of the Albanians of Macedonia with those of Kosovo, where they turned into rampant irredentists! The spirit of the Serbian Academics Memorandum will turn into an executive platform of Belgrade politics with Milosevic coming to power when his well-known campaign for redefining the Yugoslav federation in accordance with Serbian interests will begin, i.e. a unitary and hegemonic policy, which will prove its first step in Kosovo, by bringing down its autonomy, on March 23 1989, with which, in May 1991, with the attack of the Yugoslav army led by the Serbs against Slovenia (soon to spread to Croatia and a year later to Bosnia and Herzegovina), the collapse of the Yugoslav federation begins.

²⁰⁴² See: Gustav, Karl Ström: "*Jugoslawien ohne Tito*", Berlin, 1979. The well-known German publicist and publisher of the renowned newspaper "Die Welt", in a voluminous book, predicts the inevitable end of Tito's Yugoslavia, after Tito's death, which would be tragic. This assessment is based on two factors: the great Serbian hegemony associated with unitarism, which was nurtured by Moscow, interested in regaining its position there lost after 1949 after Tito, as well as the demand of the Albanians, which he called justified, on the status of the republic within the Yugoslav federation. Regarding the Republic of Kosovo as a republic of the Albanians of Yugoslavia, Schtröm saw also the possibility of restructuring the Yugoslav federation, which could save it from Serbian unitarism. As part of this reconstruction, the German author envisages the inclusion of Macedonian Albanians in this republic. The only solution for Macedonia to remain free from national tectonics, and thus the Yugoslav federation as it is, remains that, along with the Republic of Kosovo, the Albanians there be granted equal status with the Macedonians, which will not be allowed. neither by the Macedonians, nor by Serbia, nor by the Bulgarians and Greeks, who have claims against Macedonia. (See: "Memorandum SANU", in the review "Naše teme", 33 ,1-2, Zagreb, 1989, pp. 128-163).

²⁰⁴³ The Hague Conference, initiated by the European Union, was held on August 1991 in the Hague.

²⁰⁴⁴ See Preamble of the Constitution of Macedonia of 1974, defining it as follows:

"The Socialist Republic of Macedonia is a national state of the Macedonian people and a state of Albanian and Turkish nationality in it, based on the sovereignty of the people, power and self-government of the working class and all working people and democratic social self-governing community of working peoples and citizens, the Macedonian people and with it, equally of the Albanian and Turkish nationality." ("Службени весник на Социјалистичка Република Македонија", No. 7, 25.02.1974, стр. 498).

²⁰⁴⁵ Rexhepi, Zeqirja, "*Zhvillimet politiko-shoqërore të shqiptarëve të Maqedonisë, 1990-2001*", Tetovë, 2005, p. 31.

The Declaration of Independence set the independent state of Macedonia on “*the territorial integrity of the Macedonian state*” and on “*the right of the Macedonian people to self-determination*” (Article of the Declaration).²⁰⁴⁶

This formulation, viewed one-sidedly and outside the historical and ethnic context of a political formulation on a geographical basis, excluded Albanians from statehood. They rightly boycotted the September 8, 1991 referendum in order to challenge democratic legitimacy to another political construct, but were unable to prevent such an action.

However, the question posed in the Referendum: “*Are you for Macedonia as a sovereign state with the right to join the Alliance of Sovereign States of Yugoslavia?*”,²⁰⁴⁷ as a question would not be controversial for Albanians either, if it were to be viewed separately from the Declaration of Independence and of what would follow it (the election of the Speaker of the Macedonian Parliament, Kiro Gligorov and the government of Macedonia, and the statements of the Macedonian Intellectual Group of Skopje included in the so-called “Macedonian Forum”),²⁰⁴⁸ creating the platform for the Constitution of Macedonia to be approved by the Republican Assembly on November 17, 1991.

Its preamble confirmed the platform of the Declaration of Independence from September 8, 1991 about the Macedonian state as a national state of the Macedonians,²⁰⁴⁹ although beyond any connection with the historical realities of the ancient Macedonian ethnicity, where Albanians, as a direct historical ethnicity from antiquity onwards and related to the Macedonian and Dardanian kingdoms within the Pelasgian-Illyrian regime, degraded into a “minority”.²⁰⁵⁰

The degradation of the status of the Albanians from the state-forming one, which they enjoyed by the 1974 Constitution to a “minority” in that of the independent state, nevertheless required a response by the Albanians, especially in the circumstances of embracing pluralism, when they, with the “Democratic Prosperity Party” and the “People’s Democratic Party”, had been taking part in the parliamentary and institutional life of the country since the first elections in November 1990.²⁰⁵¹

²⁰⁴⁶ See Article 1: “*This statement expresses the sovereignty of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia in accordance with the constitutional provisions for independence and territorial integrity of the Macedonian state, as well as the right of the Macedonian people to self-determination, including the right to secession.*”

²⁰⁴⁷ Глигоров, Киро: “*Македонија е се што имаме*“, Shkup, 2002, p. 202.

²⁰⁴⁸ The “*Macedonian Forum*” was initiated by Gligorov in 1989 and chaired by Petar Gosev (Chairman of the Central Committee of the Macedonian Communist Party) at a time when signs of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia were being observed. With the beginning of this process, in order to answer the essential questions of the Macedonians and Macedonia Gligorov expanded the circle with academics, intellectuals, and others, focusing on the problems of the independent Macedonian state, which was to be proclaimed soon. Just as Serbian academics had acted on the occasion of the last Memorandum in 1986, Macedonians had also focused on the national aspect, seeing Macedonia only as a state of the Macedonian nation. Although there will be no hate speech against Albanians, however, they will be treated only as a “minority” whose history is “blurred”, as “Balkan remnants”, as presented by Ćubrilović, Djordjevic, and Cosic. (See: Глигоров, Киро: “*Македонија е се што имаме*“, Shkup, 2002).

²⁰⁴⁹ See Preamble of the Constitution of Macedonia: “*Based on the historical, cultural and spiritual heritage of the Macedonian people and the centuries-old war for national and social liberation and the creation of its own state, especially the legal-state tradition of the Republic of Krusevo and the historical decisions of ASNOM and legal continuity Constitution of the Sovereign Republic of the Federal Yugoslavia, of the free will of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia in the Referendum of September 8, 1991, as well as the historical fact that Macedonia was constituted as a national state of the Macedonian people in which the equal rights of citizens and permanent coexistence of the Macedonian people are ensured, with Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and other nationalities living in the Republic of Macedonia.*”

²⁰⁵⁰ In the 1974 Constitution, Albanians were on an equal footing with Macedonians and the rest. The Republic of Macedonia was considered an equal state of the Macedonian nation and of the Albanian nationality. (Службени весник на Социјалистичка Република Македонија, Но. 7, 25.02.1974, стр. 498).

²⁰⁵¹ In the elections of November 11, 1990 in Macedonia, two Albanian parties participated: “*Partia për Prosperitet Demokratik*” (“*Party for Democratic Prosperity*”), which won 17 deputies and “*Partia Demokratike Popullore*” (“*People's Democratic Party*”) in coalition with “*Partia Demokratike Popullore*” (“*Party for Democratic Prosperity*”) - 5 deputies and the “*People's Democratic Party*” 1 deputy. The winner of the elections was VMRO-DPMNE with 38 deputies, followed by the “*League of Communists of Macedonia - Party for Democratic Transformation*”, with 31 deputies. The Albanian MPs who won the first pluralist elections were: Hysni Shaqiri, Agim Fazliu, Shukri Rrahimi, Naser Zymberi, Eshref Alia, Shaban Prevala, Naif Mustafa, Ismet Ramadani, Xheladin Murati, Muhamet Halili, Vehbi Xhemaili, Abdurrahman Aliti, Hamit Aliu, Ferit Sadiku, Naim Selmani, Zudi Emini, Xhelil Tahiri, Sefedin Haruni, Nexhat Xhaferi, Ollomon Sulejmani, Gazmend

REFERENDUM ON AUTONOMY AND “ILIRIDA”

Of course, the Albanians in Macedonia, at a time when Kosovo was already under the fierce repression of the Milošević regime and the constant threat of war being carried in that part, which would have tragic consequences, and in the circumstances when transition in Albania instead of improving the situation in the country paved the way for total chaos, for fear that in the troubled Albanian triangle it would be left without support with a possibility of being sacrificed in the scene of major regional games, opted for a “democratic response” holding a Referendum on the political-territorial autonomy of Albanians, called the “*Republic of Ilirida*”.

In fact, the “democratic response” of the Albanians in Macedonia was part of a mentality that was forcibly promoted in the process of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, after the ruining of Kosovo’s autonomy on March 23, 1989. From that bloody event onwards, Albanians in the area of the former Yugoslavia, lined up together on the answer to be given to the challenge of the inevitable collapse of Yugoslavia. In the circumstances, it was Kosovo in the role of a center that took political responsibility for the fate of the Albanians in order to appear in the role of a subject that would manage the situation in accordance with its own interests.

Of course, the dramatic developments after bringing down Kosovo’s autonomy and the elimination of the entire political class so far, forced the Kosovo intellectual elite to face a historic responsibility, which could only be legitimized by the creation of a political party, capable of coming up with a political program. This was made possible by the establishment of the “Democratic League of Kosovo” on December 23, 1989 in Prishtina - the first Albanian party of a Western definition.²⁰⁵²

The establishment of the “Democratic League of Kosovo”, its rapid expansion followed by the collapse of the communist structure in Kosovo and the creation of a political center for Albanians, imposed the need for this party, already turning into a national movement, to take responsibility for the political organization of Albanians in Macedonia, in the Presheva Valley, in Montenegro, and elsewhere in Yugoslavia.

This organization, however, was neither easy nor simple, as it was subject to certain political and administrative circumstances in which the Albanians found themselves, which had to be taken into account so as not to conflict with them and especially with external factors, who had to oversee it. Thus, a flexible strategy was required around all possible options imposed by the crisis of Yugoslavia’s disintegration and the direction it could take. The common denominator, however, was the political organization of Albanians in all administrative units (Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro) through their involvement in political parties, which would be linked to the “Democratic League of Kosovo”, a common template.

So it will be. Under the direct supervision of the “*Democratic League of Kosovo*”, in May 1990, the “*Party for Democratic Prosperity*” was established in Tetova in Macedonia, the “*Democratic Action Party*” in the Presheva Valley, the “*Democratic League of Montenegro*” and the “*Democratic League in Croatia*”. All these parties were part of the

Hajdaraga, Mersim Pollozhani dhe Avdi Murtezani. Evidently, the political parties totally ignored the gender factor! So, there was not a single Albanian woman in the Macedonian Parliament!

²⁰⁵² More about the establishment of the “Democratic League of Kosovo” and its program see Buxhovi, Jusuf: “*Kosova*”, I-V, Prishtinë, 2015, Book V, pp. 216-228.

“League” of Kosovo. They bore “local” responsibilities, but they were also part of the whole. This became functional with the creation of the “*Joint Council of Albanian Political Parties in Yugoslavia*”, based in Prishtina, whose chairman was elected Ibrahim Rugova, Chairman of the “Democratic League of Kosova”.

In this regard, the “*Party for Democratic Prosperity*” of the Albanians in Macedonia played a special role, which, after the decisions of the Hague Conference of August 1991, which declared Yugoslavia dissolved, became a burden for active participation in this process, so that in the independent state of Macedonia the Albanians appeared as state-forming.

This meant two things: first, that the Albanians of Macedonia should agree with the option of an independent Macedonian state, which emerged from the Hague Conference, and second, it meant the reconciliation of Kosovo Albanians with the fact, as well as those of Albania, in so that the solution of the Albanian issue could be put on democratic rails.

Since the Kosovo Albanians were “bypassed” by the Hague Conference, which recognized the right of self-determination only to the republics, but who with the Constitutional Declaration of July 2, 1990 and in the Assembly of Kaçanik of September 7, 1990 had declared the Republic of Kosovo and seceded from Serbia, while Albanians of Macedonia had entered the political life of Macedonia, they were suggested to accept the independent state of Macedonia, provided that they were an equal subject of state formation like the Macedonians. This will be suggested to them by Albania, which faced a difficult process of transition.

In these circumstances, the process of involving the Albanians of Macedonia in the political life of Macedonia will begin, at a very sensitive stage, when on the one hand Yugoslavia was involved in the flames of war, and on the other hand, Kosovo, although it had declared independence and had responded to the Serb re-occupation by organizing a parallel state, as a form of peaceful institutional resistance, unique in Europe, facing a threat of engaging in a war that could have far-reaching consequences, to which the Albanians of Macedonia could not watch by.

And, taking advantage of the circumstances, which could have serious consequences for Kosovo and its fate if it were to be found between two fronts (Serbian and Macedonian), official Skopje subjected all the political actions leading to the declaration of independence to the concept of the nation-state, in which case the Macedonians were declared owners, while Albanians were kept in the role of a minority. Macedonian politicians, opting for the *nation-state*, were convinced that Albanians had no choice but to accept it, especially when faced with the Serbian threat.

Faced with such a situation, seeking to protect but also help Kosovo to implement its definition of an independent state, the Albanians in Macedonia accepted the challenge of democracy, even through compromises, convinced that Macedonia as a state would not be subjected to a dangerous adventure to see independence as an issue in itself, excluding Albanians from it.

In fact, that is what happened. Although agreeing to join the first government, and with 23 deputies represented a significant force of democratic parliamentarism, Albanians will be ignored and sidelined throughout the state-building process, being treated as a minority.

This prompted Albanians to boycott the independence referendum held in September 1991, in which Macedonians, without Albanians, said “yes” to the concept of the nation-state. Although this challenged its legitimacy, it did not prevent the Macedonians from declaring Macedonia *a state of the Macedonian nation*, as happened in December 1991. This did not even hold back the international factors that monitored the process and even gave it a “passing grade”, as they were convinced that since the Kosovo Albanians were under Serbian occupation, while Albania was not able to withstand the transition, this would not be of consequence.

Of course, in the face of such a reality, the Albanians of Macedonia were committed to a democratic response, for a referendum in which the political will for an autonomy within the state of Macedonia would be articulated, convinced that this could be sufficient for the democratic world and their international factor to treat them seriously and in accordance with democratic principles.

The referendum was held on 11 and 12 January 1992. It was brought by the Assembly of Autonomy, on 27 December 1991, by an almost ad hoc group of Albanians.

Albanian citizens had to declare themselves to the following the question:

“Are they in favor of the political-territorial autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia?”

Out of a total of 383,539 voters, including the voter list, 360,928, or 99.9%, voted for autonomy, while only 57 voters voted against.²⁰⁵³

After the successful completion of the referendum, the Assembly of Autonomy named the new political-territorial unit “Ilirida”, a name that had nothing to do with ancient or later realities, due to the fact that politically and ethnically this space related only to the Kingdom of Macedonia and the Kingdom of Dardania²⁰⁵⁴

Although the name “Ilirida” was coined outside an historical context, it should have included: Kumanova and its surroundings, some municipalities of Skopje, Tetova with its surroundings, Gostivar with its surroundings, Dibra with its surroundings, and Struga with its surroundings. In the territory of the Republic of Ilirida would live 1/3 of the population of Macedonia, inhabited by an Albanian majority.²⁰⁵⁵

The project of autonomy also envisaged an elaboration for the solution of the Albanian issue in Macedonia through territorial political autonomy. The project envisaged a transitional period for the Autonomy under international supervision in order to create conditions for the formation of the Albanian federal unit within an Albanian-Macedonian federal state. According to this project, the solution of the Albanian issue in Macedonia was foreseen with

²⁰⁵³ Rexhepi, Zeqirja: *“Zhvillimet politiko-shoqërore të shqiptarëve në Maqedoni, 1990-2001”*, Tetovë, 2005, p. 58.

²⁰⁵⁴ According to the drafters of this project – “*Ilirida*” was the name of the river that in ancient times wet the shores of three Illyrian Kingdoms: Dardanians, Peonians, and Aenkelei. The river passed through the lands of the Penesti tribes, in the vicinity of ancient Hiscana and the Peonian lands, and flowed into the river Aks (present-day Vardar), in Dardania. The Ilirida River is today’s Treska River. This toponym is not associated with the ancient realities, since the area of present-day Macedonia, historically and geographically in the southern part belonged to the kingdom of Macedonia, while in the northwestern part, from ancient Belisar (today’s Veles), belonged to the kingdom of Dardania, where the Paenonians and Phrygians (Brygges) are taken as Dardanian tribes. In this respect, the name Dardania would give it greater ethnic, as well as political weight, also for the fact that the main city Skopje (ancient Scupi) was the capital of ancient Dardania and the capital of the Vilayet of Kosova, at the time when the Fourteen Points of Hasan Prishtina will be announced, paving the way for the independence of Albania on November 28, 1912 in Vlora.

²⁰⁵⁵ Rexhepi, Zeqirja: *“Zhvillimet politiko-shoqërore të shqiptarëve në Maqedoni, 1990-2001”*, Tetovë, 2005, p. 58.

the formation of a binational federal state with two federal units, Albanian and Macedonian.²⁰⁵⁶

The Assembly for Political and Territorial Autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia drafted the proposal for amending the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, which was submitted to the Assembly of Macedonia. It lays out the reasons for the amendment of the Constitution, the purpose for the amendment of the Constitution as well as the changes in the preamble of the Constitution, in some of its articles, respectively in article 3, article 5, article 48, article 51 and article 52, which in the Constitution would incorporate the Albanian Autonomy, the Autonomous Republic of Ilirida.²⁰⁵⁷

At the end of this document, it says:

*“If the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia does not approve the proposal for amending the Constitution of Macedonia and does not define and guarantee the demands for political and territorial autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia, we will be obliged to advance our political definition in accordance with the natural, ethnic and historical right of the Albanian people for self-determination.”*²⁰⁵⁸

Evidently, the Albanian political factor conducted its demand addressed to the Macedonian Parliament about the constitutional changes, which should take into account the will of the Albanians from the referendum for political and territorial autonomy in Macedonia, with an open threat, which was justified if it went to that point.

As the Macedonian Parliament ignored this request, condemning it “separatist” and “incitement to war”, it remained for the Albanians to react. The vote of the people obliged them for such a thing.

But, it turned out that the Albanian political class did not take the work seriously, neither when submitting the request for political and territorial autonomy nor when they were rejected, because instead of reacting in accordance with a strategy designed in time implying an adequate response, or a unilateral action towards its internationalization, the Albanian political parties, which had put this issue into action and organized it hastily, at the same time were holding negotiations for participation in the Macedonian governing coalition.²⁰⁵⁹

This was also clear at the Congress of the Democratic Prosperity Party, held on February 8 and 9, 1992 in Tetova, after the Referendum on the political and territorial autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia and the recognition of Macedonia by Bulgaria, in which two current became apparent. One that justified the adoption of the Declaration of Independence of Macedonia without the Albanian conditioning, which saw the resolution of the Albanian issue in Macedonia within the Republic of Macedonia and the adoption of the Constitution. The other opposing the adoption of the Declaration on Sovereign Macedonia, the adoption of the constitution and committed to the implementation of the referendum on the political-territorial autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia, seeing the solution of the Albanian issue in Macedonia within an independent Macedonia, but in a binational or federal Macedonia.²⁰⁶⁰

²⁰⁵⁶ Idem.

²⁰⁵⁷ Idem, p. 60.

²⁰⁵⁸ Idem, p. 61.

²⁰⁵⁹ Idem.

²⁰⁶⁰ Idem, p. 64.

Amidst these Albanian divisions, like that of the referendum for political and territorial autonomy around which the 99.9 yes vote of the Albanians was taken, the Macedonian factor, as well as the international one, in view of lack of seriousness of the Albanian political factor to go to the end of a work it started, as was the demand for political and territorial autonomy, and lack of internal unity, did not see it fit to change the course it started.

On the contrary, joining the ruling coalition, splitting the “Party of Democratic Prosperity” into two parties after a while (with the Albanian Democratic Party of Arben Xhaferi, whose helm he will take in 1995, from where he, in 1997, will also enter into the governing coalitions with the Macedonian nationalist parties VMRO-DPMN of an anti-Albanian cause), not only left in the background the will of the Albanians expressed in the referendum, but it was left as if completely forgotten.

This caused the Albanians to gradually lose the trust of their political subjects to the extent that the conviction was created that with that behavior the change of their political and legal status in Macedonia could not be influenced.

Indeed, here and on this issue, one must look at the causes of the war that engulfed Macedonia in 2001, which on the one hand was driven by the Macedonian state concept of discrimination against Albanians in the institutions of the state system and in the circumstances of parliamentary democracy. On the other hand, it was encouraged by the irresponsible behavior of the Albanian political class, reflected in internal divisions, that instead of committing to achieving equal state-building status in the common state and subjecting every action to this issue, focused on using the power for personal gain as an ornament of Macedonian parliamentarism and under the tutelage of Macedonian nationalist political parties.

This war, of course, could have erupted even earlier, if it were not for two factors that would postpone it for a while, but by no means avoid it. First, developments in Kosovo - so that it did not get involved in a war imposed on it by Belgrade and, even if it happened as it did in 1998/99 - be taken under NATO protection. And secondly - developments in Albania, with the transition not only failing to be carried out properly, but taking the direction of chaos, as happened in 1997 when the Albanian state faced a civil war, which threatened its very existence which needed NATO intervention to protect it from self-disintegration.

In the face of these factors, the Albanians in Macedonia, though not their politicians, behaved almost necessarily “responsibly”, by not getting involved in an internal conflict provoked by the Macedonians, who demanded that they respond by some kind of revolt or uprising, which would create a trump card for Belgrade to intervene in Macedonia, by which the issue of Kosovo, in contrast to the opening of the conflict in Macedonia, would fade or lose international attention altogether. On the contrary, the Albanians in Macedonia, despite the discrimination they experienced in the circumstances of “democratic parliamentarism” in all aspects, when their parties participated in almost all governments adorned with ministerial posts and directors in some state departments up to ambassadors, in some segments, they turned to the model of the “parallel state” that Kosovo had already turned into a credo of institutional resistance.

Such was the establishment of the Albanian University of Tetova, in December 1994, in response to the violence against the right to education at the level of higher education. A

similar action was taken in culture, with the preservation and organization of events with a national spirit as well as the publication of important literary and scientific works, which had been discontinued by the Macedonian state.

The holding and organization of the Albanian University of Tetova, declared illegal by the Macedonian government as well as other forms of cultural manifestations of the national spirit, in fact, divided the Albanian society in Macedonia into two poles. That of the *legal-institutional wing*, about a beneficiary minority, which followed the line of participation of Albanians in institutional life through the representation of political parties, which brought no benefit other than the personal benefits of some party structures sharing the cake of mostly corrupt power and service of Macedonian politics. And, that of the *“institutional-illegal”* wing, on the concept of a two-ethnic state Macedonia, in accordance with the 1992 referendum, linked to “Ilirida”, which could alternatively have the option of national unification.

This hypothetical option, which had the majority, however, depended on the developments in Kosovo and its epilogue, on the position of the Albanian state on this issue, and above all, depended on the international factor and its plan in relation to the answer that to the general crisis caused by the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the fall of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In the circumstances when the Albanian political factor was not only not united around one option but also appeared divided on the concepts of “multiethnic democratic state”, as demanded by Arben Xhaferi and DPA,²⁰⁶¹ and the “state of two equal peoples”, as animated by the already non-political spectrum (mainly by intellectual circles affiliated with the University of Tetova),²⁰⁶² on the one hand, the relations between Macedonia and Kosovo deserve special attention, and on the other hand, those between Albania and Macedonia, because in the Skopje-Prishtina-Tirana triangle, the Albanian factor could keep the regional crisis out of the influence Belgrade and its allies were trying to provide, or had turned it into its factor, with many unknowns and dangers for the Albanian cause itself.

In this calculation, Arbën Xhaferi maintained the “balance” of the impotence of the Albanian political factor with “political realism”, mostly camouflaged with “democratic standards”, where the concept of “nation state”, such as the Macedonian one had to be transformed by within “multiethnic societies” and the like, that suited Skopje to maintain “internal peace” and the like, a formula that could also be said to suit almost everyone: Macedonians, Kosovo, and Albania, as well as the international community (the West), which demanded that the crisis that had erupted by Belgrade’s hegemonic policy be kept under scrutiny, but at the same time that it be given an epilogue in line with Western interests.

RELATIONS BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND KOSOVO ON THE EVE OF THE WAR IN KOSOVO

²⁰⁶¹ See the political platform of PPDSH led by Arben Xhaferi, in May 1995, in Rexhepi, Zeqirja: *“Partia Demokratike Shqiptare”*, Tetovë, 2004, p. 109.

²⁰⁶² See the open letter of Nevzat Halimi after the division of the PPD and his departure from it: *“Quo vadis, Shqipëri?”*, in “Flaka e vëllazërimit”, 18 February 1994.

If it can be said that the attitude of Macedonia towards the Albanian issue in general and Kosovo in particular, since the creation of AVNOJ Yugoslavia, in accordance with Tito's oscillations towards it, have been identical to those of Belgrade, and that, in the years 1981-1991, official Skopje joined the anti-Albanian course of Serbia to overthrow the constitutional position of Kosovo in the Yugoslav federation, to which by the 1974 constitution it was raised to the position of an equal factor, from 1991 onwards, i.e. from the declaration of independence, Macedonia treated Albanians as a national minority, while Kosovo as a "province" of Serbia. This speaks to an anti-historical attitude of this state towards the issue.

Macedonia maintained this position not only in the circumstances when Serbia re-occupied Kosovo, while the Kosovo Albanians, with the Constitutional Declaration of July 2, 1990 and the Assembly of Kaçanik on September 7, 1990 by the proclamation of the Republic of Kosovo, seceded from Belgrade, maintaining it even in the coming years, when Serbia's hegemonic policy turned into a war policy in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with tragic consequences. In almost all of his statements, Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov treated Kosovo as "part" of Serbia, emphasizing "respect for human rights" in line with "minority standards" and not an ethnicity that in the Yugoslav federation had an equal position, a right that had been brutally violated by Belgrade.²⁰⁶³

Although Gligorov's position in this regard did not differ from that of the international community, nevertheless, ignoring the political realities created by Kosovo Albanians with their organization of the "parallel state" and the democratic legitimacy he had, and above all, the inclusion of Albanians in the Macedonian state obliged him for political realism. Gligorov had to take into account in particular Kosovo's position in support of Macedonia's independence, in which case the leader of the "Democratic League of Kosovo", the main force of the national movement, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova had asked the Albanian political factor in Macedonia to support the independent state of Macedonia, provided that they were guaranteed an equal position. Dr. Rugova had maintained that same attitude even after the election of the President of the Republic of Kosovo in April 1992. In addition, Dr. Rugova had advised the Albanians in Macedonia not to be involved in any developments, from those under the carpet to open ones, that could endanger the existence of the Macedonian state, as it was considered that an independent Macedonia, regardless of the conjectural definitions with Belgrade and others, was in the interest of the Albanians and their cause.

The emphasis on this issue is important for the very existence of the Macedonian state, because Belgrade, despite its support to Skopje to keep Albanians discriminated against on the basis of minority status, had several times, in various forms, urged Rugova to get involved in several bargains for the fragmentation of Macedonia "along ethnic lines", which required the participation of Albanians in an uprising hatched there by Belgrade, which would be supported by Kosovo. The offer that had come to him from Šešelj and his radicals,²⁰⁶⁴ as well as that of Čosić after being elected President of Yugoslavia, Dr. Rugova had rejected on the grounds that "he did not want to enter into any games that would go for seven scenarios for a Greater Serbia", especially in Macedonia, where Albanians saw their interest not in its fragmentation, but in strengthening of the common state, but as equal and democratic.²⁰⁶⁵

Rugova was principled in this matter, but also in his commitment that the participation of Albanians in the parliamentary and institutional life of the country should not turn into a farce, as will actually happen from 1994-2001, but that it be conditioned with the demand of Albanians for full equality (status of state-building people). He will urge Arben Xhaferi to hold to the same position, after he takes over the leadership of PDSH and become the political leader of the Albanians in Macedonia at the price of separation of Nevzat Halili's PDP and

²⁰⁶³ Глигоров, Кири: "Македонија е све што имаме", Shkup, 2002.

²⁰⁶⁴ Вухови, Јусуф: "Косова" I-V, Prishtinë, 2015, Book V, pp. 364-371.

²⁰⁶⁵ Idem.

the cost of weakening the Albanian political factor in Macedonia in line with Skopje's position, for the Albanian political scene to be as scattered and divided as much as possible.²⁰⁶⁶

Of course, this attitude will affect the official Macedonian policy "to be skeptical" of Rugova's "readiness" to support Macedonia's independence, seeing it as a "conjunctural issue". This will even make the official Macedonian policy act with all possible backgrounds against the "Party of Democratic Prosperity" led by N. Halili, in order for it to be divided, being considered Rugova's "hidden hand" in Macedonia, although this party was established under the direct supervision and influence of the LDK and Rugova in the circumstances of the beginning of the crisis of the former Yugoslavia when the Albanian political factor, linked to that of Kosovo, appeared as a pivot of the Albanian political movement to be given an answer in accordance with the Albanian interests, taking into account the developments and circumstances. The "Party of Democratic Prosperity" as an equal member of the Council of Albanian Political Parties in Yugoslavia, had supported the platform of three options resulting from it where Albanians, according to the first option, if the constellation of an equal federation was maintained, where the Republic of Macedonia was also protected, they supported the Republic of Kosovo. According to the second option, if the internal Yugoslav relations of eight units were to be broken, the Albanians of Macedonia would support the joint Albanian republic in Yugoslavia. Whereas according to the third option - if Yugoslavia disintegrated as a whole, they appeared with the option of national unification.²⁰⁶⁷

N. Halili's departure from political life and his imprisonment "for hostile activities", although it was all related to the project of "Ilirida" and his views but also to a large part of the Albanian factor there about the inseparable ties Kosovo - Macedonia and their maintenance in all circumstances, with Arben Xhaferi being catapulted on the Macedonian political scene as the leader of the largest Albanian party, brought about the option of Macedonia "multiethnic democratic state", as a compromise between the *nation-state*, as Macedonia was built with the 1992 constitution, and "democratic rights of Western standards", where their implementation in accordance with the highest standards legitimized equality for all, with which, according to Xhaferi, Albanians were equated with others, within a democratic constitution where Albanians must to be treated as an equal community in Macedonia.²⁰⁶⁸

The option of a "democratic state", in which Albanians "should be treated as an equal community", which did not jeopardize at all the concept of *nation-state*, on which Macedonia and Gligorov were built, even in front of the UN rostrum on 26 April 1993, will call it "a historic and democratic achievement of the citizens of Macedonia",²⁰⁶⁹ created for Macedonia an image of a European "oasis" in the turbulent space full of wars of the former Yugoslavia, with which it began to be strongly supported even turning into an example.

But Gligorov, a staunch politician who knew what the Macedonian internal cauldron was boiling and how it could explode one day, especially after the Dayton Accords, when Milošević practically acknowledged the defeat of "Yugoslavia" and the Kosovo issue, for the fact that was left alone, it would definitely be put on the agenda, it will try to change the rhetoric, uttering a word about the "violation of the rights of Albanians in Kosovo" and "the need for the issue to be resolved through peaceful means and dialogue", though always alluding that Kosovo should remain within Belgrade.

As part of this mostly beneficial rhetoric, official Skopje began to show a little "more flexibility" (actually scared) after the emergence of armed resistance in Kosovo, by the middle of next year and, especially, by the end of 1997 when the "Kosovo Liberation Army"

²⁰⁶⁶ From author's correspondence with Dr. Rugova in 2002-2005.

²⁰⁶⁷ Buxhovi, Jusuf: "Kosova" I-V, Prishtinë, 2015, Book V, pp. 246-250.

²⁰⁶⁸ See "Platforma e PDSH-së", in Rexhepi, Zeqirja: "Partia Demokratike Shqiptare", Tetovë, 2004, p. 131.

²⁰⁶⁹ Глигоров, Киро: "Македонија е се што имаме", Shkur, 2002, p. 345.

came out publicly taking over the leadership of the armed resistance, thus overcoming Rugova's peaceful institutional movement.

The return of Macedonian politics to "reality" had to do with the fact that the hegemonic policy of Belgrade, with which it, for years, had flirted, especially in relation to the Albanians, was coming to an end. Fearing that the war as a continuation of politics by other means could affect Macedonia and thus its status in relation to the Albanians, which could no longer be guaranteed by Belgrade, official Skopje had accepted almost its entire "observation" infrastructure. The OSCE in Macedonia, as it had received other humanitarian observation missions from several Western countries (Germany), whose purpose was not only to "monitor" the situation, but also to take measures to prevent the spread of the conflict to Macedonia.

And, seeing the developments in Kosovo taking the direction of armed conflicts, in early 1997, Macedonia had requested observers from the UN and the OSCE, including the military, thus openly moving away from the "umbrella" of being an undeclared Belgrade defender. Thus, in mid-1997, the Government of Macedonia had entered into an agreement with the German Government to send civilian and military observers to Macedonia to monitor the crisis on the border between Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo.²⁰⁷⁰

At the same time, similar agreements were reached with the US and several other international humanitarian missions.²⁰⁷¹

The escalation of the crisis in Kosovo after the outbreak of armed conflicts in the spring of 1998, when the "Kosovo Liberation Army" had already established "free zones" in many parts of the country, forced Macedonia to rely almost entirely on the OSCE, the UN, and also NATO. In fact, Macedonia received assurances from the United States, as well as NATO and other European partners, that the crisis in Macedonia would not be allowed to expand by Serbia, Kosovo, or Albania. These "guarantees" were at the cost of making Macedonia and its entire space available for humanitarian purposes (receiving of refugees, their temporary accommodation and the creation of conditions for humanitarian organizations and other missions related to them).²⁰⁷²

It can be said that from mid-1989 to June 1999, Macedonia, as well as Albania, were forced to return to an array of humanitarian infrastructure, as well as NATO military logistics. This was reflected, especially on the occasion of the start of the NATO air campaign from March 24 to June 12, 1999, when the Northwestern Alliance bombed the military targets of the Yugoslav army and Serbian police in Kosovo and Serbia. It is no coincidence that the June 9th military agreement between NATO generals and those of the Yugoslav Army on the withdrawal of Yugoslav military and police forces from Kosovo was signed in Kumanovo.

From early April to June, Macedonia accepted over 500,000 Albanian refugees from Kosovo. Initially, Macedonia wanted to prevent a large influx of refugees entering in the direction of Tetova and Skopje, which would benefit Milošević to use the movement of people inside Kosovo as a strategy to reduce the intensity of NATO bombing due to the protection of civilians turned into military targets. This effort was reflected in the transitional camp in Bllaca, when from 2 to 6 April, tens of thousands of refugees were trapped in a makeshift space there, in difficult humanitarian conditions. This forced the UN and other humanitarian mechanisms to evacuate the Bllaca camp, while leaving access to Macedonia open to refugees. Thousands of refugees were transferred to two other reception centers (camps) in Stankovec near Skopje and another in the direction of Tetova. From there, some of the refugees were transported to European countries, the US, Canada, and Australia.

The transfer of refugees to Macedonia, over half a million of them, as well as their temporary accommodation in several camps, is an important chapter of the humanitarian aid

²⁰⁷⁰ Laquoi, Heinz: *"Der Kosovo-Konflikt – Wege in einen vermeidbaren Krieg"*, Baden-Baden, 2000.

²⁰⁷¹ Lutz, S. Dieter: *"Der Kosovo-Krieg"*, Baden-Baden, 2000; Schmid, Thomas: *"Krieg im Kosovo"*, Hamburg, 1999.

²⁰⁷² Biermann, Rafael: *"Leherjahre im Kosovo"*, Bonn, 2002, pp. 580-586.

that Macedonia provided to Kosovo in the very tragic circumstances that its entire population was going through.

This was significantly encouraged by the great solidarity of the Albanian population in the border area, from Tetova to Skopje and Kumanova, and their willingness to put everything at their disposal, including the participation in the war by many young people, giving even their lives.

RELATIONS BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND ALBANIA

In addition to relations with Kosovo, which went through several almost dramatic phases, from which Macedonia, although an ally of Belgrade, for strategic and political reasons, enjoyed the support of the Albanian political factor in the independence process and ensured several years of “internal peace”, even to the detriment of Albanians by degrading them into a national minority, relations with Albania were also of particular importance to Skopje and the course of its constitution as an independent state in the circumstances when it was at the crossroads of the regional crisis. In this respect, Macedonian politics not only received the support of Albanian politics at all stages on the political and diplomatic plain, but it also relied on international forums (UN, OSCE and others), where Albania had its own voice and could challenge the concept of a *nation-state* over which Macedonia declared independence by discriminating against Albanians.

Albania’s silence on this fact as well as the international support given to the Macedonian state, had its reasons, both internal and external, with the internal ones (difficulties during the transition and the emergence of chaos in the second half of the nineties with the events bloody of 1997), playing a special role.

In the face of the prevailing circumstances, official Skopje behaved quite comfortably in relation to Albania. This will even affect further vassal behavior towards Belgrade in relation to Belgrade and the Albanian issue in general, because Macedonian politics was not challenged by anything to do otherwise. On the contrary, Macedonia, in some cases, opened the issue of the rights of the “Macedonian minority” in Albania, in which case, official Tirana managed to confirm its existence in some parts thanks to the declaration of an individual or a limited language group. In this regard, Albania acknowledged that Albanians in Macedonia, despite their historical and cultural ethnicity, should be treated as a minority, demanding that their rights and freedoms be guaranteed in accordance with them.

Despite this political situation, since the establishment of Macedonia as an independent state, between Skopje and Tirana, economic relations and those of free circulation of goods and citizens marked a positive increase with mutual benefits. It was similar with cultural and educational exchanges without the restrictions and limitations existing during the ideological border.

But what stands out from the mid-nineties onwards has to do with official Tirana’s interest in political influence over Albanian political entities in Macedonia, as well as the intellectual spectrum traditionally associated with Kosovo.

Since, historically, from antiquity but also in all the developments to the latest that had determined the Albanian state building, the Albanians of Macedonia had been constantly connected with Kosovo and its fate in all aspects (social, spiritual, and political), it was natural for this connection to further expand with those towards Albania, when the inter-Albanian ideological border had fallen, while the Macedonian state emerged as a new factor in the middle.

This development, however, highlighted the efforts of official Skopje, i.e. Macedonian politics, on the one hand to keep relations with Kosovo “limited” in accordance with the new

state realities and on the other hand, to direct relations with Albania in such a way that the influence of Albania shrinks or eliminates altogether the spiritual and cultural ties of Kosovo with Macedonia, which have always been viewed as threatening.

Both Albania and the Albanian political entities in Macedonia started behaving on this plan of Skopje, especially after Arben Xhaferi later came to the helm of the DPA, whereupon he turned into a focus of interest of Albanian politics, but also of Skopje, towards a factorization, which meant in a way a separation from the connection with Kosovo, especially from the influence of Rugova and connection with Albania, specifically with Sali Berisha at that time in power.

Of course, even for Arben Xhaferi, the “new role” in relation to Skopje and Tirana, appeared very attractive, because it took him out of the anonymity of Prishtina, towards an “orbiter”, where he, with the formulas of “democratic standards” and “multiethnic society” with which he operated very well, came up with a “reconciliation recipe” between the “nation-state” option, on which Macedonia was built, and that of the “democratic society”, in accordance with European requirements and their criteria for coping “of transitions without conflicts” and the like.

In this role, Arben Xhaferi, who could not be denied the political culture and intellectualism of the Yugoslav levels, appeared useful for the Macedonian politics, but also for the Albanian politics of Tirana (led by S. Berisha), who had his eye on Macedonia and the connection of the Albanian political factor there with Albania.

Certainly, the factoring of A. Xhaferi by Albania, if he were determined to advance the status of Albanians in Macedonia to that of the state-building people and not to the minority in which it was, would be useful, provided that the historical and cultural ties of the Albanians with Kosovo were not affected, even though Macedonia had been declared an independent state, while Kosovo was in a situation fighting by all means to free itself from Serbian occupation.

It is noteworthy that A. Xhaferi’s connection with official Tirana did not leave unaffected the relations with Kosovo, for which the Macedonian politics was very interested, acting actively to disrupt the political factor there, especially the “Party of Democratic Prosperity” – an offspring of the “Democratic League of Kosovo”, as will actually happen in 1994. Moreover, with the involvement of A. Demaçi in this project, the then Albanian politics, on the one hand, demanded that Kosovo Albanians participate in the Serbian elections to “support democratic change in Serbia”, and on the other hand, demanding that an “alternative of active resistance” be created at all costs within Rugova’s policy of institutional resistance (parallel state) until the war, beyond the circumstances suitable for it, although A. Xhaferi did his best to spare Macedonia of war..

Evidently, the “radical” course of official Tirana, by the opening of any premature conflict in Kosovo and outside cooperation with the Americans, was meant to save the policy of collapse of the Albanian state created by the pyramid system, corruption, crime and others, as actually happened in March 1997, when Albania plunged into a civil war and was on the verge of collapse as a state.

The chapter of the tragic collapse of the Albanian state in 1997, the outbreak of the civil war with several thousand victims and what happened after the NATO intervention for the liberation of Kosovo in the spring-summer of 1999, suited the Macedonian state to maintain its 1991 course, based on the nation-state concept. The change of political course in Albania (Berisha’s fall and the arrival of Nano socialists), although in the circumstances when the international intervention in Kosovo was being prepared passing on the tracks of “formalities”, did not change the relations between Macedonia and Albania towards the Albanian political factor in Macedonia and their role in replacing the historical connection with Kosovo with that of Albania, even in the name of “national unity”. In this reorientation, Arben Xhaferi also maintained the positions he held during the time of Sali Berisha,

strengthening them even more by the “war” factor in Kosovo, mainly from the ranks of LPK - a close ally of the Albanian neo-communists, who will take over the “patronage” over the KLA and the armed resistance.

The wedges inserted between the movement of institutional resistance of Rugova and the KLA to the detriment of a joint institutionally led armed resistance, in which even with pragmatic intentions Arben Xhaferi was involved, will suit Macedonia, since the energy of the Albanian political factor, included in the co-government with the Macedonians but in the role of vassal, will be focused elsewhere and not on the demand for the status of equal state-building people and the elimination of the state “democratic” discrimination, which also led to the 2001 war.

CHAPTER FIVE

MACEDONIA AND THE “NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY” WAR IN 2001

WAR FOR AN UNFINISHED PEACE

The end of the armed conflict in the Presheva Valley during 2000 between the UCPMB and the Serbian police forces and those of the Yugoslav army stationed in that part, as well as the unsatisfactory outcome for the Albanians there, who had expected, at least, for the international factor to raise the issue of political and territorial autonomy in line with the demands of the March 1992 referendum, opened another war for the Albanians near the former front, in a geographical area, with a border dividing ethnic Albanians into three states (Kosovo, Serbia, and Macedonia), who, in the time of the former Yugoslavia, had lived in a common state, although divided into different administrative units, which had not hindered a joint educational and cultural development within the ideological concept of equality of nations and nationalities as well as the standards that had been raised on them throughout the country. In that common state, that is, Tito’s Yugoslavia, although the Albanians were divided into three administrative units (in the Republic of Macedonia, in the Socialist Province of Kosovo and in the Presheva Valley in three municipalities), as part of the same ethnicity, they saw Kosovo as a cultural, educational, and spiritual center, which was also reasonable for the Albanians of Macedonia and those of the Presheva Valley, to raise the political status of Kosovo towards advancement with the 1974 Constitution, to be taken as a victory of them.

Returning to the same demand positions of the sixties and eighties, within the then Yugoslav realities of administrative borders, which did not hinder the common national identity, but rather, in the latest developments after the changes brought by the 1996 Brioni Plenum, helped the new realities brought by the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and with it the war in the Albanian space, in Kosovo, the Presheva Valley and Macedonia (1997-2001), has to do with the restoration of the right to a political position political to be exploited in the new geostrategic circumstances of the return of the West to most of the Balkans, even with the introduction of the war factor. The war had also determined the fate of the divisions, but also of the Albanian tragedies in these areas, especially since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire onwards, when the hegemonic nationalisms of the neighbors (Serbs, Montenegrins, Greeks, and Bulgarians) had configured the political and state map of the Illyrian peninsula, mostly to the detriment of Albanians, such as the Versailles Yugoslavia, which, however, had not withstood the test of time also because of being unable to extinguish by force the

Albanian problem in it, as claimed by the hegemonists on all sides, but neither tolerate the equality of Albanians with others in a common state, as proclaimed by the communists during and after the war. The collapse of Yugoslavia will not return to the Albanians the situation they had when their common historical ethnicity was violently torn apart. However, placing Kosovo under international protectorate, ending almost a century of Serbian occupation, and declaring Macedonia an independent state, provided that Albanians fight for the most appropriate political position that would secure them the status of a state-building people, created opportunities for the return of a policy, albeit with “partial” interests, in accordance with their ethnic dispersion.

Therefore, the observation of the armed conflicts in Macedonia and the developments that brought them, no matter from what positions they appeared and what were the forces that were put in charge of them, speak of an unfinished effort of this historical goal. It was not coincidentally related to Kosovo, as the epicenter with Albanianism turning into a political program in the Assembly of the Albanian League of Prizren in June 1878, leading the national movement for independence, in the configuration of which, however, the area of present-day Macedonia, largely part of the Vilayet of Kosova (with Shkup as its capital), provided the outcome to these developments, such as that of August 1912, when the great uprising of that summer ended in an agreement known as the Fourteen Points of Hasan Prishtina, in which case the Ottoman Empire accepted what could be called an Ottoman Albania (a united Albanian ethnicity in four vilayets: Kosova, Shkodra, Manastir, and Janina). This great victory of Albanian nationalism paved the way for the independent Albanian state, proclaimed on November 28, 1912 in Vlora, despite the fact that Kosovo and Macedonia as well as other parts of the Albanian ethnicity that had prepared it through knowledge and blood, as a result of the Balkan wars and the occupation of their space by the Serbian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian and Greek armies, remained detached outside the Albanian trunk, under Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek captivity. This situation turned the Albanian historical and spiritual center into a suburb, while the periphery (truncated Albanian state) in its center, a reality that could turn into a historical fatality, if the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia would agree to slavery accepting the status of a “minority” as defined by the London Conference of Ambassadors of 1913, that of the Paris Peace of 1920, the decisions of Yalta, and others.

This historical view, the war in Macedonia, in 2001, ten years after AVNOJ’s Macedonia²⁰⁷³ declared its independence from the Yugoslav federation, ²⁰⁷⁴ even after its

²⁰⁷³*The Second Conference of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council of Yugoslavia (Druga Sednica Jugoslovenskog Antifašističkog Vjeća), known as AVNOJ, held on November 29, 1943 in Jajce (Bosnia), decided that the next Yugoslavia, coming out of anti-Fascist war, should be reorganized into six federal units, equal to the right of secession. They were: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The decision for Macedonia to be declared a federal unit of Yugoslavia had no formal basis, as there were no representatives of the National Liberation Councils in Jajce, nor could there be, as Macedonia was then divided between Bulgaria (with Pirin and Vardar and Skopje as the capital), and Greater Albania (with Tetova, Gostivar, and Dibra), created by fascist Italy. Even the party organization of this space was divided into two parts: the Macedonians were affiliated with the Communist Party of Bulgaria, while those few cells of the Albanian communists, from 1943, were affiliated with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The so-called Communist Party of Yugoslavia for Macedonia was founded in the Prohorcinjski Monastery near Kumanovo (in the Serbian part), where two or three Macedonians living in Belgrade (Kolisevski, Gligorov, Crvenkovski and others) were formally co-opted, while it was led by the Serb Svetozar Vukmanovic --Tempo, in charge of liaison between the Yugoslav and Albanian communists, who were directly supervised by J. Broz Tito. The Anti-Fascist National Liberation Councils (ASNOM), under constant direction of the communist group without a party base, were established on August 3, 1944, after the capitulation of fascist Bulgaria, which was followed by the introduction of Yugoslav and Bulgarian partisan regiments. In these councils led by the Yugoslav partisans, some Albanians, connected with the Yugoslav communists and those of Albania, will be included, who will agree on a common anti-fascist front, whereby two joint Macedonian-Albanian brigades were established, which took part in the fighting against the national resistance units in the Presheva Valley, led by Colonel F. Dibra, in Karadak and in Western Macedonia, led by Xhemë Gostivari.*

²⁰⁷⁴ Macedonia started the process of independence as a state with the Declaration approved by the Macedonian Parliament on January 25, 1991. Pursuant to this declaration, on September 8, 1991, a referendum was held with the question: “Are you in favor of Macedonia as a sovereign state with rights to enter into the union of the sovereign states of Yugoslavia”. This decision was in line with the decisions of the Hague Conference of August 1991, by which the Yugoslav federation was declared dissolved, as well as those of the Badinter Commission that oversaw this process. The referendum was not attended

conclusion of with the Ohri Agreement, did not turn its war in Macedonia into a simple episode, as “a as an action that was necessary to put on the green table the trampled demands for equality”,²⁰⁷⁵ but ranks it instead within the framework of the three wars waged by the ethnic Albanians of this part within a century for national interests. The first war was in 1912 against the Serbian occupation. The second war was that of 1944-45 against the Slav-communist invasions. Whereas, the latter, although started as a national liberation war, sought to achieve the status of a state-building people, i.e. that of equality, with which Macedonia should be defined as a state of Albanians too.

Historical contexts of the first two wars (1912 and 1944-45) - when the ethnicity was protected from Slavic invasions and the last war (2001) as a liberation war (with the focus on achieving the status of state-forming people),²⁰⁷⁶ although differing in terms of political objectives within the current configurations (distribution in two states and in an international protectorate), are nevertheless part of the historical development of an ethnic group rooted in antiquity, which participated in the construction of ancient civilizations and empires and the most famous kingdoms of the world: from that of Troy, the Dardanians, and Macedonia to that of Rome and Byzantium, which seeks to be treated as an indigenous historical ethnic group and not as a minority, as defined by the Macedonian constitution of the year 1991.

Contemplating the dissatisfaction of Albanians during a decade of parliamentary life from the rejection of the Referendum on political-political and territorial autonomy in 1992, to the emergence of Tanusha shots, which in a short time turned into an armed uprising that included the area towards Tetova, Gostivar up to Dibra and most recently appeared in the part of Kumanova and on the outskirts of Skopje with the real threat to put the capital under siege and thus separate it from other parts of the country, are also related to the Kosovo war and towards her. Therefore, this war was experienced by the Albanians in Macedonia both as right and inevitable, since, as had happened in Kosovo when war provided answers to all those questions that political performance (movement of institutional resistance with the parallel state) failed to provide, although it had created legitimacy frameworks, similarly it could help in Macedonia so that the Macedonian state, i.e. the Macedonians, accept the Albanians' equality to a state-building status, or risk being disbanded, i.e. destroyed, with which the Macedonians themselves come out the biggest losers.

Although different ways between the movement of institutional resistance in Kosovo with the parallel state with that of the participation of the Albanian factor in the institutional life of the Macedonian state, nevertheless they, as common denominators, had the political will for the parallel state on the one hand and participation in the common state in the other as a state-forming, but where war, as imposed, turned into a tool of politics for certain purposes.

And, if Belgrade consistently used violence until the war against the democratic will of the Albanians and impose its occupation, in Macedonia, Macedonian politics, seeing that Kosovo was under Belgrade violence, while Albania involved in constant chaos never recovering and never able to turn into a factor that could help her brothers in Kosovo and Macedonia and from the belief that that Albanians were undergoing an bad hour everywhere, used the “democracy dictatorship” to impose on Albanians being treated as a minority. Thus, in the circumstances of parliamentarism, the “democratic majority” (Macedonian) was used to discriminate against Albanians and degrade them into a minority, which turned out to be the truth that democracy does not always appear as a remedy for the wounds and injustices of the past, especially when dealing with hegemonic consciousness and heavy burdens, such as those coming from Belgrade and Skopje to the detriment of Albanians and their ethnicity. The same as it happened in Serbia in 1989, when Milošević destroyed Kosovo's autonomy by

by ethnic Albanians, whose composition in the total number of Macedonia was around 30%, which, from a political and democratic point of view, this act had no legitimacy.

²⁰⁷⁵ Rexhepi, Zeqirja: “Zhvillimet politiko-shoqërore te shqiptarët në Maqedoni 1990-2001”, Tetovë, 2005.

²⁰⁷⁶ See: KLA Communiqué no. 6, in Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare”, Dibër, 2014.

tanks, arguing that he was “restoring the historic Serbian right” that had been “taken away in Kosovo”, so did Macedonia “by a nation state right”, when by the approval of the Declaration of Independence in September 1991 and the Independence Referendum in the same year, the Slav-Macedonian “majority” used the parliament to issue a constitution to declare a nation-state, where Albanians could be included as a “minority”, although they possessed an historical and ethnic right to the state from antiquity and continuity.

Discrimination against Albanians in Macedonia through the “dictates of democracy” and “political rights” for the state, whether as an artificial construct, almost followed a parallel to those of Belgrade’s actions against Kosovo Albanians since 1991, when Kosovo declared a referendum on independence and approached the parallel state until 1999, whereas Serbia launched a police and military campaign to settle accounts through the means of war that was prevented by NATO military intervention. This clearly shows that between Skopje and Belgrade, there was not only an agreement on an anti-Albanian stance, but also their political actions were analogous, where both “democracy” and war were used to force them to remain under the treatment of minorities, even though it was precisely that treatment and discriminatory policy that had destroyed Yugoslavia.

And, as will be seen, it will be precisely the war, to which the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia will one day turn, that will determine the outcome to these two developments: Kosovo by removing it from Serbian occupation and placed under an international protectorate, thus putting it on the unstoppable rails of independence. Whereas, Macedonia will overturn the constitutional realities (a one-sided Macedonian national state with the degradation of Albanians as a minority), which was created by the “dictatorship of democracy”, in which case, with the Ohrid Agreement, under the criteria of equality within the parliamentary system, at least formally, turns the *nation-state* into that of citizens, although the one with the official language - Macedonian with the Cyrillic alphabet and other national symbols, practically preserves the Macedonian national character.

Viewed in the context of this historical development, the Albanian war in Macedonia, although representing a continuation of the Kosovo war, not only on a large number of fighters participated in both these wars and many of them sacrificing their lives (including its main command structures), but even though it is part of the struggle for common national interests, it nevertheless has its own peculiarities of a political nature turning it authentic. Among them, however, the following are typical: organization, dynamics, the political demands (the definition of the state of Macedonia and the connection of the demands for constitutional equality in it), and above all, its consequences, which have to do with the intervention of the international factor in it (especially American and European), that it was interrupted by reaching a political agreement (Ohrid), when the KLA marked military successes against the Macedonian army, which if continued could lead to the collapse of the state of Macedonia, opening up another incredibly dangerous regional crisis with many unknowns.

In this regard, the military aspect, however, is important to present, as it is a well-organized and very successful war in the *military* field, which managed to internationalize the issue of Albanians in Macedonia as unresolved, especially in the circumstances when from outside, Macedonia had begun to be seen as an “oasis of peace”, paving the way for the *political platform* of the Albanians about the future of Macedonia.

The response of the international factor (US, NATO, EU) was quick and energetic because Macedonia was not only unable to win the war, but also risked losing it. Their intervention would not only prevent the military conflict from entering into a further dynamic towards the escalation of the crisis, but would define the political framework for the demands of the Albanians, which were reached in Prizren between the political representatives and the KLA, as well as Ohrid Agreement, between Albanians and the Macedonian state.

But the international intervention (especially the American), in addition to keeping the military conflict under control until its complete cessation, was said to have influenced the KLA to change its demands with great speed: from those of the liberation war of national character, as it had at the beginning, after a while - in the fight *for the position of the state-forming people (two-nation state)*, which, very soon, ended in the *issue of equality* within the multiethnic state, an epilogue that did not even need war.

THREE ASPECTS OF THE KLA WAR: MILITARY, DIPLOMATIC, AND POLITICAL

Military aspect – war for territories

The war in Macedonia, despite the “false peace” created by an open discrimination of Albanians in the institutional and political life followed by a nationalist hysteria in public life, as well as the irresponsible behavior of Albanian political factors in the institutional and political life of Macedonia was not unexpected when it exploded. Its warnings came long before, especially after the end of the Kosovo war and the well-known political and social realities it created with the international protectorate and NATO presence, which radically changed the geostrategic and geopolitical configuration of this part of the region where different interests crisscrossed. Surprising, however, was its rapid development, from a seemingly limited uprising to a mountainous environment ready for rebellion, such as that of Tanusha, to an army that managed to turn into a powerful factor of war, which set in motion the international factor to intervene so that it, with the momentum it had taken and the military superiority it demonstrated more and more convincingly in relation to the Macedonian police and military forces, would risk the existence of the Macedonian state, and with it turning into a new hotbed of extremely dangerous hotbed in the region.

Viewed from a military aspect, this war appeared as:

- *well organized militarily,*
- *with spreading dynamics, and*
- *successful in achieving combat goals.*

1. *Good military organization*, in line with the military hierarchy, was marked by a rapid transformation of an uprising into the “National Liberation Army” (KLA), which began on February 16, 2001, with the first clash of a group of fighters from Tanusha (many of whom had taken part of the Kosovo war) with the Macedonian police units, positioned in that part at the settlement called Laku i Epërm.

The armed conflict had erupted because the Albanian fighters, for days positioned in that part, had not allowed a police patrol to climb Tanusha. Fighter Muzafer Xhaferri, known as the first KLA martyr in Macedonia, was killed on that occasion.²⁰⁷⁷

According to many sources, the armed conflict in Tanusha had long been provoked by the behavior of the Macedonian police forces, which, not coincidentally, in that part of the border with Kosovo, demonstrated violence, especially against the local population, endangering their property, and over all free movement towards Kosovo and vice versa, in

²⁰⁷⁷ More about the emergence of the KLA in Tanusha and its organization in accordance with the tradition of liberation wars in these areas, as well as the first war of the Tanusha unit with Macedonian police, on February 16, 2001, see: Arifi, Feriz: “*Tanusha në rrjedhat e historisë*” (“*Tanusha in the course of history*”), Tetovë, 2015, pp. 297-315. Arifi also brings the names of KLA fighters who took part in the battle of Laku i Epërm. They are: Muzafer Veli Xhaferi, Naim Selmani, joined by Idriz, Selman, Xhafer, and Bislim Alia. Muzafer Veli Xhaferi, who is marked as the first martyr of the KLA war in Macedonia, was killed in these fights.

order to move from there, a project that had been on almost all the agendas of the Yugoslav regimes, but which for Macedonian politics, boasting for being spared from war, gained special positioning weight for its detachment from Kosovo and its vital ties with it. Police violence particularly affected young people who, under the “pretext” of controlling weapons or participating in the Kosovo war, were raided, ill-treated and often punished on defamatory “facts”. In accordance with the provocative policy towards the Albanians, in that part, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, police checkpoints appeared, where the inhabitants of the border area were also provoked. All, then, made it known, that the next war was being sought and was inevitable.

Although the outbreak of war could also be taken as a matter of some natural reaction of small groups to police violence, such as those faced by residents of the border zone with Kosovo, however, the events of Tanusha, and those that appeared in that part from the beginning of January when a platoon of fighters, consisting of local fighters and those who came from Kosovo (among them a team from the village of Baballoq of Dushkaja of Gjakova, who were not involved in the process of demilitarization of the KLA),²⁰⁷⁸ got involved in armed conflicts with police patrols, who were also barred from entering the surrounding villages, speak of a preliminary organization, which had three purposes.

First - to give an answer to the Macedonian state to the provocations and discrimination of Albanians in these parts.

Secondly, for Macedonia to be stripped of the false mask of the “oasis of peace”, as propagated in the meritorious international forums, while there Albanians, with their minority status, were discriminated and mistreated in almost all areas of life.

And third - by war, to impose on Macedonia the political option for Macedonia - a two-nation state.

The issue of an armed response to the Macedonian provocations in these parts also arises from the very story of General Gëzim Ostreni, Chief of General Staff of the “National Liberation Army”²⁰⁷⁹.

General Ostreni admits that in the whirlpool of these war sketches, which spread widely and not without reason, a senior KLA superior was sent to Tanusha, as an instructor in this platoon, giving the physiognomy of the first of the 113th Brigade “Ismet Jashari – Kumanova”, which was established shortly after as the first organized military formation within the National Liberation Army (KLA).

General Ostreni, former Chief of Staff of the Third Zone of the Kosovo Liberation Army and, at that time, holding the position of Commander of the Third Operational Zone of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), also announced that on the evening of 26 January, together with the instructor, a group of superiors arrived in Tanusha (as revealed from Kosova).²⁰⁸⁰

²⁰⁷⁸ Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001*”, Dibër, 2014, p. 162.

²⁰⁷⁹ General Gëzim Ostreni, comes from Dibra. He completed the normal school, while graduating from the Reserve Officers’ School and the courses of the Yugoslav Higher Military Academy. In the eighties he served as Commander of the Territorial Defense in Dibër within the Yugoslav Army. In the Kosovo war he will be involved from its beginnings as Chief of Staff of the KLA of the Third Zone, and during and after the transformation of the KLA he was the commander of the third operational zone of the KPC. He was promoted to KPC Brigadier General by the Provisional Government of Kosovo. In March 2000, he was promoted to the post of Chief of General Staff of the Kosovo Protection Corps with the rank of Major General. With the start of the war in Macedonia, he became the Chief of General Staff of the “National Liberation Army” in Macedonia. After the war he graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology in Prishtina.

²⁰⁸⁰ See: Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001*” (“*National Liberation Army - causes, war and sights in Macedonia in 2001*”), Dibër, 2014, p. 162.

They immediately set to work for the insurgents to operate under a joint command and under the supervision of professional superiors. Within ten days the group of 30 fighters was divided into three platoons, having occupied combat positions in that part.²⁰⁸¹

The testimony of General Ostreni at that time from the position of Commander of the Third Operational Zone of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) about the organization of KLA members from Kosovo to Macedonia, speaks of the role and direct participation of the KPC in this development, which is evidenced by his appointment as Chief of General Staff of the “National Liberation Army”.

However, the February 16 conflict, as well as its first casualty from the KLA, had alarmed the entire Macedonia. The official media, fed by the first information from Tanusha brought by the A1 TV team, which was allowed to enter there and film the KLA fighters as well as their commitment to, as they stated, protect the population from state violence, had Macedonian rulers rise to their feet. On February 19, 2001, the Security Council convened. A decision was made to strengthen the garrisons at the national level, as well as the entire border line with Kosovo, from where fighters were said to enter Macedonia (it was also pointed out that for a long time there, in the areas supervised by the American KFOR, they were trained without any difficulties).

From this meeting, with dramatic tones about the “threat of Albanian terrorists”, displayed in Tanusha and the border zone with Kosovo, the UN Security Council, the US, NATO, Russia and EU countries were informed, and a decision was taken for action “against terrorism”.²⁰⁸²

The alarm of the foreign opinion was followed by the statement of President B. Trajkovski to the nation. The message of 26 February 2001 stated that Macedonia would strongly defend its sovereignty and integrity. “No one should doubt our determination to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the peace and tranquility of our citizens.”²⁰⁸³

President Trajkovski called on “all political parties in the Republic of Macedonia, regardless of whether they are in power or in opposition, regardless of ethnicity, to give full support to the activities and efforts of their state, in interest in its security and stability.”²⁰⁸⁴ On this occasion, Trajkovski stated before the nation that “there are members of the uniforms of illegal groups in certain parts of the border between the Republic of Macedonia and the rest of Yugoslavia, in the part of Kosovo”, in which case he said he was “maintaining regular contacts with state officials and NATO representatives”, from whom, he said “we have full support”.²⁰⁸⁵

On the same day that President Trajkovski addressed the nation, he had ordered the first actions “for cleansing of terrorists”, attended by several units of the Kumanovo Corps and the first infantry brigade “Scorpions” (“Шкорпиони”) from Stip, which was known as an “anti-terror unit”. Macedonian forces exchanged fire with KLA groups around Tanusha, but failed to infiltrate the area.²⁰⁸⁶

Once he understood the reality, that is, that the KLA units in the part of Tanusha could not be eliminated by an “action” and that there was already a well-organized military force, which could not be easily stopped, with a letter, Trajkovski addressed the UN Secretary

²⁰⁸¹ Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001”, Dibër, 2014, p. 163.

²⁰⁸² Idem. Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001”, Dibër, 2014, p. 167.

²⁰⁸³ “Дневник”, 26 .02.2001, quoted according to Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001”, Dibër, 2014, p. 167.

²⁰⁸⁴ Idem.

²⁰⁸⁵ Idem.

²⁰⁸⁶ Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001”, Dibër, 2014, p. 167.

General and the UN Security Council, Kofi Annan. The letter said that “Macedonian security forces are the target of terrorist attacks almost every day”, as part of a “traditional expansion of radical ethnic militancy” and that the Republic of Macedonia has no alternative but to face a situation in a part of its territory near the border under the control of militant extremists.”²⁰⁸⁷

In the letter, Trajkovski informs Annan that “all political means have been exhausted to find a peaceful solution to the serious threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state.”²⁰⁸⁸

It is interesting to note that Trajkovski in his letter to Annan mentions the “traditional expansionism of a radical ethnic militancy”, in which case he alludes to the introduction of so-called “great Albanian ideas” and the threat from them, both for Macedonia and for the siege, in which case the finger is pointed at Kosovo, from where they feed on radical ethnic militancy. In this way, Trajkovski, hiding the real cause of the war in Macedonia, which was first related to the exclusion of Albanians from state formation and their permanent discrimination for ten years, wants to blame the “ethnic militants”, seeking to justify the fight against them in the name of “protecting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state”, although it was NATO military intervention in Kosovo that broke this taboo as state law and sovereignty could not be used as an alibi for a state to declare war on its citizens if they seek to be equal and sovereign, as was the case with Kosovo.

For Trajkovski and the Macedonian military, leaning on the “alibi of state sovereignty and integrity” as well as an open propaganda being waged inside and outside the country, especially inside, forcing all political forces, including the Albanian ones, to unite around it, was a good reason to intensify the military action against “terrorists” in the parts where the Albanian revolt had erupted. Thus, on March 4, 5 and 7, Macedonian forces (police and military), accompanied by artillery and helicopters, launched an operation in the direction of Tanusha. In the fighting, the KLA groups, thanks to tactical maneuvers, managed to repel the attacks of the Macedonian forces and even, in Kodër e Furrës, take control of the UNPRED observation point.²⁰⁸⁹

What emerged from the first failed offensive of the Macedonian forces towards Tanusha, however, highlighted the first military physiognomy of the KLA, as reflected in a new organization accordingly. Thus, in addition to the formation of the 113th Battalion “Ismet Jashari-Kumanova”, it was decided that a company of developing KLA company of soldiers for the formation of the 112th Brigade “Mujdin Aliu” with mostly fighters from Kosovo, to start operating in the part Central Macedonia, in the Tetova region. At the same time, the decision was made to form the 115th Brigade, northeast of Grapčan, to operate in northwestern Macedonia. The KLA response must have surprised not only the Macedonians, but also the foreign observers, who closely followed all the developments in that part.²⁰⁹⁰

2. *Dynamics of KLA expansion* - was observed from the beginning, when from its defensive positions in Tanusha and the siege, after being continuously attacked by joint Macedonian police and military forces, in response to the already announced Macedonian option to give “Albanian terrorism” a “military response” in order to eradicate “their adventurism against Macedonia”, began to spread rapidly in other parts inhabited by Albanians, which actually started the *war for territories*.

The KLA waged a *war for territories* with great success, extending in two directions: in the north-western part (Tetova, Gostivar, Dibra, Kërçova, and Struga) and in the eastern part (in the direction of Skopje and Kumanova), under the supervision of strategic

²⁰⁸⁷ Idem, p. 167.

²⁰⁸⁸ Idem.

²⁰⁸⁹ Idem, p. 172.

²⁰⁹⁰ Idem, p. 174.

communications points with which at any time the KLA could declare about a third of Macedonia a “liberated territory”.

This reality could be used for the formation of an autonomous political-territorial unit of Albanians in Macedonia, or for other political options “in the air”²⁰⁹¹

But when it was expected that the *autonomous political units* would be given a response in accordance with the option of state organization on the federal principle, by Communication number 6 of the KLA from March 9, the way was closed. Instead, with Communication No. 6, the KLA came to the defense of the state territorial integrity of Macedonia, with equal sovereignty of the two peoples: Macedonians and Albanians.²⁰⁹²

After the communiqué number 6, the General Staff of the KLA, on March 21, moved from the village of Bresana in Prizren, to Vica in Tetova and settled in a house, where it became known that some of those who until yesterday were in the leading structures of the KLA during the Kosovo war, led the war. Among them, *Ali Ahmeti* appeared in the post of KLA Commander, while General *Gëzim Ostreni*, in that of Chief of General Staff.²⁰⁹³

Ali Ahmeti and General Ostreni came from Macedonia (the first from Kërçova and the latter from Dibra), where they had started their political activity from the time of the former Yugoslavia, or after its collapse being part of the “People’s Movement of Kosovo”, its Switzerland branch. Both were also known for participating in the leadership hierarchy of the “Kosovo Liberation Army”: Ali Ahmeti in the structures of the “Political Directorate of the General Staff”, when they were being led from Albania, while Gëzim Ostreni - participant in the war, in the command structures, from the beginning to the end.²⁰⁹⁴

The extension in the direction of Dibra, Struga to Kërçova, as a strategic coordinator of the KLA and its war for territories, had to pass through Tetova and Gostivar. The preconditions for this action were created on March 23, 2001, with the creation of the 111th Brigade and its involvement in the fighting in that part by means of three developing battalions: that of Dibra, Struga, and Kërçova.

The combat operations of these brigades in those parts started in the beginning of April and, within a short time, they supervised all the strategic points in the area, in which case they managed to supervise the communications on the Dibër-Mavrovo road. KLA fighters will defend these positions at all times. Macedonian police and military forces from time to time took action against them, but constantly withdrew from the good defenses of the KLA formations, positioned in these parts.

It is worth mentioning that within this good military organization, the Second Battalion of the 111th Brigade, operated in the direction of Struga and Ohri in order to be supervised as needed or to close down the Ohrid-Struga road. While the Third Battalion of the 111th Brigade in the Kërçova region. During July and August, these battalions closed the Kërçova-Gostivar and Gostivar-Dibra roads near Mavrovo.²⁰⁹⁵

In addition to the successful extension from Tetova to Gostivar, Dibra, and in the directions of Struga and Kërçova, where more or less stable but also mobile lines were established, from March to August, the KLA managed to open and stabilize the Northern-Kumanova front and the Western-Kondova front.

The main burden on the Kumanova front was carried by the 113th Brigade “Ismet Jashari – Kumanova”. The first battalion of this brigade was concentrated on the Goshincë-Brezë line, from where it exerted pressure in the direction of the municipality of Likova,

²⁰⁹¹ See: Pettiffer, James: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 227.

²⁰⁹² Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001*”, Dibër, 2014, p. 188.

²⁰⁹³ Idem, p. 258.

²⁰⁹⁴ Pettiffer, James: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 275.

²⁰⁹⁵ See: Арцовски, Митре-Кузев, Стојан – Дамјановски, Ристо: “*Војната во Македонија во 2001 година*”, Скопје, 2006, стр.351, according to Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001*”, Dibër, 2014, 204.

Slupčan, towards Hotel, and in the direction of Kumanova. The fighting of this Brigade, in these front lines, was done in order to come under surveillance and block the main roads in Northwest Macedonia, in Montenegro (Karadak) of Skopje, Kumanova and especially to block Skopje.²⁰⁹⁶

The Western Front, that of Kondovo, was held by the 115th Brigade. The front line was located south and north of Gračan, closing the Kuçkova-Gračan road, which enabled the Skopje-Han i Elezit road to be monitored, but not closed (because KFOR forces were passing through it).²⁰⁹⁷

When talking about the dynamics of the expansion, i.e. the spread of the KLA, it can be said that it successfully followed the concept of a war for certain territories, mostly inhabited by Albanians, and that it within a month, namely from the beginning of March by the beginning of April, reached all the coordinates envisaged by the opening of the front in a length of 100 kilometers, keeping under supervision the initiative of the war, maintaining and increasing the military force until the creation of working conditions for local institutions.²⁰⁹⁸

3. *The military success of the KLA* – is closely related to the fact that it succeeded in fulfilling the stated military goals, which turns out to be the most successful military organization that the Albanians developed during and after the destruction of the former Yugoslavia. Although rumored that the KLA in Macedonia originated from a rebellion of a small group of fighters from Tanusha and the surrounding area with war experience in the Kosovo Liberation Army and that of the Presheva Valley, which brought up to 30 people, who, it was said, needed military support, however, the developments emerging from the beginning of March until the end of June show that the “National Liberation Army” had the depiction of the show, plans and a military concept in the form of a well-crafted strategy from a professional point of view (through an action of small groups) from where it will quickly move to organized formations and, as General Ostreni acknowledges, the role of Kosovo fighters involved in it and that of the KPC itself (with professional advice) was great.²⁰⁹⁹ This will be confirmed as soon as the fighting started in the Tetova area and in the directions towards Dibra, Struga, and Kërçova, as well as in the direction of Skopje and Kumanova, from where, within three weeks, an arch was created along the Kosovo border and towards Serbia and along the Albanian border running from the north (at the junction with Kosovo) to the south (to Lake Ohrid).

Its deployment in these parts, as well as their oversight, offered the KLA two opportunities for a successful conduct of the war even if it continued. The first was the possibility of free supply of equipment and weapons from Kosovo and Albania at any time. Appropriate geographical configuration (numerous mountain roads) always remained open even if some of them were to be “supervised”. And secondly, from these parts, the KLA also, as needed, in various forms, but very appropriate, maintained the open lines of transfer of military formations in Kosovo and Albania as well as their tactical movement in various parts in which the Macedonian police and military forces could not penetrate. This strategic arch fulfilled the final link from the middle of June with the entrance to Haraçina, from where Skopje, its surrounding area, the roads towards Kosovo and Serbia, as well as the Skopje International Airport were practically supervised. The strategic supervision increased the weight of the KLA fortifying positions in a part of Karadak as well as around Kumanova, from where the valleys stretching in the direction of Kumanova and Skopje.

²⁰⁹⁶ Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001*”, Dibër, 2014, pp. 278/79.

²⁰⁹⁷ Idem, p. 280.

²⁰⁹⁸ Idem, p. 291.

²⁰⁹⁹ Idem, pp. 187-172.

Although the Macedonian intelligence services (police and military assisted by Belgrade and Russian experts) may have had extensive reports on the activities of “terrorist” groups, as the fighters who took part in the KLA war in Kosovo and the Presheva Valley were being called, the way the KAFOR services and US forces were informed stationed on the border with Macedonia for exercises and gatherings in the border area with Macedonia (which also lacked information on the actions of the Macedonian police and military forces in this border area, particularly when they used violence against the inhabitants of this area) however, the Macedonians had provoked the war by believing that it could all remain on the scale of a detached reaction, in the form of an ad hoc conflict. This was because the scattered KLA fighters in Kosovo and Macedonia, even if they are tempted by something, would not be able to start another war, after the one in the Presheva Valley, when KFOR and the Americans, not only had not given them support, but they had allowed, in an agreement with the Yugoslav Army, to be given back the opportunity to operate in the five-kilometer security zone, where they had the main support of the operation.

Relying on the defeat of the UCPMB as well as the benefits that Belgrade was estimated to have had, especially ignoring the referendum of the Albanian population of the Presheva Valley for cultural and territorial autonomy held in 1992, official Skopje, too, could have calculated that the Albanian insurgents and the eventual “Ilirida” card would lose any support from the international factor, which supported the independent Macedonian state.

Despite these accounts that cannot be excluded where historically and politically the issues remained open, especially as the Albanian issue, which had always appeared as the pivot of all crises in these areas precisely because it had been ignored and sidelined, the reality turned out to be different. “Small terrorist” groups were not mere “provocateurs”, measuring different “pulses”, nor “mercenaries” of certain religions, but were rather trained military formations, whose power quickly became apparent. Within 3-4 weeks, they not only prove themselves, creating “facts” through stable front lines and the space they controlled, up to guerrilla actions in certain vital parts, from where they quickly withdrew at minimal losses, showing clearly that the war able to spread to every part of the country.

Indeed, the fighting from March to mid-April highlighted on the one hand the mobilization and maneuvering ability of the KLA as well as the professional conduct of its fighters, well prepared and equipped with light and highly sophisticated weapons against armored units up to anti-aircraft weapons, and on the other hand, highlighting the inability of the Macedonian police and army to confront the KLA and its formations as well as its tactical and strategic moves, despite the “anti-terror” units and others trained by Serbian, Russian, and other military experts, including foreign mercenaries.

Disappointing for the Macedonian state was the organization of their armed forces, which, despite the big words spoken by its senior officers and empty promises at rallies and TV shows, were seen as completely unprepared for military challenges, which they were facing.²¹⁰⁰

This was even noticed by the international observers, who were closely following the battle for Tetova, on March 22, in which case they were convinced that this battle would never be won by the Macedonians and that it was the Albanian fighters who had the initiative and could extend to the surrounding areas as well.²¹⁰¹

²¹⁰⁰ The *Macedonian Armed Forces*, consisted, on paper, of 18,000 regular soldiers and 85,000 reservists. This hypothetical force was militarily unprepared. If one adds to this the fact that over a third of the soldiers were Albanians, then it becomes clear that it was not even able to take any combat action, despite the fact that in its ranks there were also special units (“Scorpions” and “Volcis”, mainly mercenaries). The Interior Ministry police were more organized. It consisted of 7600 members, organized according to the model of Serbian anti-terrorist units (JSO). The armaments of the Macedonian army were not of any quality either. It had three T-34 tanks with a 100-millimeter cannon and a battery with two 16-barrel rocket launchers. There were also some helicopters, which lacked trained pilots. It had recently received several helicopters from Ukraine. (Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*”, Dibër, 2014).

²¹⁰¹ Pettifer, James: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*”, Tiranë, 2013, p. 277.

It was not long before NATO observers and international actors who were closely monitoring the situation came to this conclusion, becoming concerned that the Macedonian state's option "for resolving the conflict", with the "side of the war", which he was constantly repeated, despite its inability on the fronts and the vitality of the KLA to snatch the Macedonian army by the nose. This forced the international factor to put in play the card of "cessation of hostilities", "talks" and even "peace agreements".

Unable to prove themselves in battles, where they usually suffered successive losses, or were allegedly withdrawn "for tactical reasons", the Macedonian police and military units tried to compensate their military defeats with violence against civilian buildings and other actions against the population in the areas KLA units operated. This was reflected in the city of Tetova, in Likova, as well as the mountain settlements in the direction of Kumanova, those in the part from Kosovo and in the direction of Dibra and Gostivar. However, the target of retaliation by the police and military forces was Tetova and the surrounding area, where KLA forces entered and left without any difficulty and could even keep it surrounded, especially the mountainous part in the direction of Sharr, where tanks and military helicopters were used to ruthlessly demolish urban areas and road infrastructure.

This caused a large part of the population of those parts to move to Skopje, or to cross the border to Kosovo (mainly) but also to Albania, thus threatening Macedonia with a humanitarian crisis.

In addition to the actions of the police and military forces as a sign of revenge in the urban parts of Tetova and other Albanian-majority cities of Polog, unbridled violence was also used against the Albanians of Skopje by paramilitary and other units, hysterically demonstrating against Albanians, demanding to be deported to Albania, while also attacking their properties (shops, workshops, and schools where Albanian children attended classes). The images that the major world television companies (BBC, CNN, N-TV and others) carried, which reflected an anti-Albanian debauchery against the civilian population and their properties in Skopje and elsewhere, influenced the military solution option offered by the Macedonian government's allegedly "against terrorists" (arguing that NATO should do it), made the international factor appear in the public with the option of an agreement with the Albanian fighters, which meant the political demands, which, in those circumstances, it was clear as to what they could be.

In these circumstances, the KLA decided to approach some Albanian-inhabited parts of Skopje with some of its units, in order to protect them from the Macedonian paramilitaries, who operated freely day and night.

In addition, by being ready to enter Skopje, the KLA wanted to exert double pressure on the international community: on the one hand, to accept that Macedonia, declared a national state of the Macedonians, valued for years "as an oasis of peace" still being given support and promises for EU association,²¹⁰² and the like with which it was incessantly tempted to maintain the "democratic" course, was nothing but an unstable creature, which could be destabilized at any time, and on the other hand, to make it known that it was precisely the Albanians and their discrimination by the Macedonian state built on nationalist arrogance that had caused war, to which for bringing to an end "war therapy against terrorism", as official Skopje claimed, did not work, despite the losses suffered on the military plain, but rather considering the demands of the Albanians and reaching an agreement with them through the mediation of the international factor.

Indeed, the KLA's incursion into Haraçina on June 11 was prompted by two parallel actions by Macedonians: on one side of President Boris Trajkovski's Peace Plan

²¹⁰² As part of the temptation, Macedonia on 9 April 2001 signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. A condition for this was that Macedonia put an end to the conflict with the Albanians and that everything had to be achieved by June 15, before the Gothenburg Summit. The EU also promised Macedonia development programs and other assistance that would "build internal peace".

demagoguery, with which he sought to gain the support of the international community using cosmetic proposals to trap the Albanian political factor in Macedonia to distance itself from the KLA war with rumors that it was already lost. On the other hand, the “will for peace” that he was presenting “in the direction of the Albanians and the international factor”, to use for military operations against the KLA in two phases, putting into action almost all means at disposal: from artillery to aviation. According to the First Phase of the operation, government forces would try to surround the KLA units in the Mateç village areas by dropping several “Wolves” units by helicopter landing on the most important points (hills). Hotel, Orizore, and Sllupçan, disconnection towards Likova, and disappearance of KLA depots.²¹⁰³

In Phase Two, the operation had to focus on actions for the destruction, pursuit, and complete annihilation of small units of the remaining groups.²¹⁰⁴

As these military operations of the joint Macedonian police and military forces, as usual, had failed, while government propaganda continued to misinform on “achieving war goals” against “terrorists”, these scams were done through fictitious television footage, while this TV show started to receive support from NATO and Russia (in the meeting between Secretary General Robertson and Russian Defense Minister Ivanov in Brussels), although they knew the military reality as well as President Trajkovski’s gymnastics with “peaceful initiatives”, the KLA, after numerous concessions “restraint not to penetrate militarily in some strategic areas” and after agreeing to give politics a chance to reach a peace agreement, decided to respond by entering the suburbs of Skopje, in Haraçina, placing it under surveillance on June 11, 2001.

The introduction of the KLA in Haraçina as well as the destruction of police units in that part, their escape leaving behind weapons, created panic in Skopje, especially in the part of the population accustomed to hearing the official news about “victories against terrorists”, as well as the confusion of the international observers on the Macedonian side.

But for NATO and especially for the American part in it, the introduction of the KLA in the suburbs of Skopje did not come as a surprise, as there were abundant reports about the KLA’s combat capability as well as empty words from the Macedonian government about resolving the conflict through the “war option”.

Knowing these realities, in order to keep the situation under control, the Americans warned the KLA commanders that “the war should not be transferred to Skopje”.²¹⁰⁵ Whereas the Macedonian government was asked to prevent provocations against the Albanian population in Skopje and the violent actions of paramilitaries in Albanian neighborhoods.²¹⁰⁶

From the point of view of military capability, the KLA could have entered Skopje even earlier and even surrounding it on all sides, if it had not been prevented from the stationing of the NATO units in the north, from mid-May, when NATO observers disarmed several KLA groups suspected of plotting to enter the Macedonian-populated northern part of Skopje.²¹⁰⁷

Unable to hide the KLA infiltration into Haraçina, Interior Minister Boškovski appeared with a dramatic appeal to the international community about how there were 700-800 “terrorists” in Haraçina, who he said “had taken into their hands all the strategic places together with the houses of the inhabitants of this settlement.”²¹⁰⁸

Boškovski’s dramatic appeal was not in vain, as from that part, KLA fighters targeted the main strategic facilities of Skopje and the surrounding area: Skopje International Airport,

²¹⁰³ Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001”, Dibër, 2014, p. 568.

²¹⁰⁴ Idem.

²¹⁰⁵ “Fakti”, 12 June 2001; “Дневник”, 12. 06. 2001.

²¹⁰⁶ “Fakti”, 13 June 2001.

²¹⁰⁷ Pettifer, James: “Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës”, Tetovë, 2013, p. 278.

²¹⁰⁸ Ostreni, Gëzim: “Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare – shkaqet, lufta dhe pamjet në Maqedoni në vitin 2001”, Dibër, 2014, p. 570.

barracks, oil refinery, and the Belgrade-Athens highway, which could be blocked at any time.²¹⁰⁹

Diplomatic aspect of war – internationalization

The penetration of the KLA in Haraçina of Skopje, maintaining and also strengthening of the positions in the hill points around Kumanova overseeing the railway and highway roads with Serbia as well as other crossings towards the central part, the extension in the border area with Kosovo (in the part of Elez Han) and the full supervision over the area from Tetova to Gostivar, Dibra, to Struga and Kërçova, in the world media showed the image of a Macedonia, which in the war with the KLA, not only was not succeeding, as promised by Prime Minister Georgievski to give the “terrorist aggression”, which also came from Kosovo,²¹¹⁰ a military response, but increasingly leaving the impression that out of arrogance and stubbornness to accept the power of the Albanian factor in Macedonia was on the way to disintegration as a state, by which the region would face a crisis, perhaps more greater than that which followed the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

At this point one must see the diplomatic aspect of the internationalization of the Albanian issue in Macedonia from the KLA war. Here, however, the international factor has many “merits”, in the first place the UN, EU, OSCE, and others, that instead of preventing the main cause of this planned crisis - the creation of the Macedonian national state, ignoring the ethnic Albanian factor in it, which also in the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, by the 1974 Constitution had an equal position, passed by as if the emergence of the Macedonian state proclaimed on the principle of nation-state, albeit with constant trouble in the Balkans, was the only possible recipe for the youngest state in the Balkans, although this was opposed by the Albanians, who not only did not participate in its constitution, but responded by holding a Referendum on Territorial and Political Autonomy in Macedonia.²¹¹¹

Although the Albanians did not act responsibly towards the Independence Referendum and seemed to forget it after a while, engaging in institutional life and power structures, nevertheless this was a sufficient sign that the path of declaring the Macedonian state as a state of the Macedonian nation was to be reconsidered before it was too late and that it could produce crisis but by no means stability. Not only did this not happen, but Macedonia was praised from all sides. As such, in 1993, it was accepted into the UN, thus internationally accepting the concept of a nation state.²¹¹²

Praise official Skopje received even when not only did it not allow teaching in Albanian language at the state university, but also when taking strict measures to prevent the opening of the University of Tetova with teaching in Albanian language, which was forced to be funded from private donations.²¹¹³

²¹⁰⁹ Idem.

²¹¹⁰ Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski, at the extraordinary meeting of the government, on March 15, 2001, made a statement, in which he stressed, among other things, that “at first the state faced the challenge of eliminating terrorist groups, which came from the territory of Yugoslavia, respectively Kosovo. Later it turned into frequent armed activities and attacks on vital objects of special importance, so that in recent days we experience open calls against state order, endangering the constitutional order and security of our country with open identification and public identification of the perpetrators of these terrorist acts”. (See: “Дневник”, 16. 03. 2001).

²¹¹¹ Rexhepi, Zeqirija: “*Zhvillimet politiko shoqërore të shqiptarëve në Maqedoni 1990-2001*”, Tetovë, 2005, p. 44.

²¹¹² Kiro Gligorov, President of Macedonia, in the UN rostrum, on April 8, 1993, revealed a political history of the Slavo-Macedonian people, its antiquity, ethno culture and state identity associated with the Republic of Krushevo, 1903 and the meeting of ASNOM in 1945 when Macedonia was created, which was included in Yugoslavia. So, Gligorov spoke about the formation of the nation-state and the Macedonians as a nation-state, all in the spirit of a historical rhetoric, without relying on historical realities. (See K. Gligorov’s speech at UN, in “Дневник”, 9. 04. 1993).

²¹¹³ The initiative for the establishment of the University in the Albanian language in Tetova started on June 4, 1994, by the Assembly of Albanian Intellectuals of university level, together with the representatives of various associations and political entities. The University of Tetova was established in a solemn session held on December 17, 1994. (See: Rexhepi, Zeqirija: “*Zhvillimet politiko-shoqërore të shqiptarëve në Maqedoni 1990-2001*”, Tetovë, 2005, pp. 108-115).

The attacks on the University of Tetova, as well as the discrimination of Albanian students to study in their mother tongue, also preoccupied the Council of Europe, which approved a resolution in this regard. There were also reactions from several European universities, harshly criticizing the discriminatory policy of the Macedonian state towards Albanians.²¹¹⁴

However, it will be the escalation of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia (the spread of the war in Croatia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the concern that it could include Kosovo, where the international factor was concentrated, which removed the concern over the discrimination of Albanians to Skopje, including that of the University of Tetova.

This situation, however, which was expected to end one day, changed with the emergence of the first fighting between insurgent groups in Tanusha and the surrounding area in early February 2001.

And, the moment the Macedonian Prime Minister, L. Georgievski came out with the announcement that “Macedonia was attacked by terrorist groups coming from Kosovo”, while A-1 television broadcast images of Albanian armed groups in Tanusha, international factors reacted fearfully as if waking up from a nightmare.

Of course, it was the Americans who took the diplomatic initiative to end the uprising, although they had no plan on how to achieve this. It all had to start with a “comprehensive” mediator, a well-educated diplomat and an expert on the realities there, who would go under the OSCE mandate. The Americans set out for their diplomat Robert Frowick, who, within a month, was to achieve interethnic reconciliation in Macedonia, acknowledging the fact that there were ethnic disagreements there,²¹¹⁵ which had been deliberately kept silent.

The inability of the Macedonian army to resolve the conflict by war, as it started, and the ability of the KLA to use the war for political purposes, opening a new crisis in the region after that of the former Yugoslavia, put NATO, the Americans, and the EU in play, because everyone was aware of what it could bring if it continued the way it had started.

With this concern, on March 26, 2001, Javier Solana and the Secretary General of NATO, Lord George Robertson, came to Skopje.

The arrival of Solana and Robertson in Macedonia actually represented the greatest achievement of the KLA war in the diplomatic plan for the internationalization of the Albanian issue in Macedonia.

This internationalization, although accompanied by messages of “protection of the territorial integrity and state sovereignty” of Macedonia, as well as “threats sent to those who endangered this” and the like, as repeated in press conferences, made Macedonia forever different from what it was, a national state of the Macedonians, whose character would be determined by the epilogue of the Albanian war, the size of which the internationals sought to limit within the framework of territorial integrity and state sovereignty and guarantees for it, which will be given by the KLA in Communication No. 6 of March 9, 2001, presenting also the basic position of the KLA on the preservation and territorial integrity of Macedonia, conditioned by the following requirements:

International mediation for the settlement of disputed issues, from which the conflict arose and

²¹¹⁴ See: “*Rilindja*”, March 25, 1996, about the visit of the representatives of the University of Tetova, chaired by the rector Dr. Prof. Fadil Sulejmani in Brussels and Bonn as well as the reactions of Albanian students at the universities of Bohum, Berlin, and Brussels.

²¹¹⁵ The American diplomat *Robert Frowick* had worked in Macedonia as the first OSCE diplomat in 1992, and then as the first executive director of the non-governmental organization “Searching for Common Ground” in Macedonia in 1994. Frowick had planned that the activity developed in three stages: The first was related to the formation of an interethnic coordination group, consisting of both major Macedonian and Albanian political parties. Second, the formation of a government of national unity and, finally, the beginning of a peace process, pushing for an end to the violence and the withdrawal of Kosovo Albanian extremists, in order to clear the way for a political dialogue capable of producing agreement and compliance. (See: Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*”, Dibër, 2014, pp. 351-355).

Amendment of the Constitution of Macedonia, so that Macedonia is a state of two peoples: Albanian-Macedonian, respectively Macedonian-Albanian.²¹¹⁶

Although Robertson did not meet with KLA representatives, it is clear that he was aware of the KLA commitment to respecting Macedonia's territorial integrity and state sovereignty, as expressed in Communication No. 6, or in eye to eye, as a message to him from one of Ali Ahmeti's envoys, from the outskirts of Tetova, where his headquarters were, a commitment that could have calmed the NATO Secretary General.

The message issued by Communication No. 9 of the KLA leads to the diplomatic start of consideration of the political demands of the KLA, which, despite the verbal support given to the Macedonian leadership during meetings at various levels by internationals "to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty", in fact, was paving the way for developments that would lead to talks on a peace agreement, which had to take into account the "constructive" demands of the Albanians. Those were related to constitutional reforms and other changes in the character of equality, with which Albanians were represented in accordance with the population structure in all state institutions and especially in those of the police, judiciary, and army, where they had been symbolically represented.

The discourse of constitutional "reforms" and a new democratic relationship on state organization, which would close the door to similar conflicts, was made known to Macedonian officials at a meeting on April 2 with NATO Secretary General Robertson with the ambassadors of the North Atlantic Council in Skopje. At the joint press conference with President Trajkovski, Robertson almost replaced the military language about "the isolation of extremists in Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo" with the fact that "the withdrawal of extremists (he did not call them terrorists) should be replaced with that of dialogue", adding that "peace in Macedonia should be established through constitutional reforms and full equality".²¹¹⁷

The ritual of "supporting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of Macedonia's borders", which for Macedonian leaders seemed to be turning into a pressure of inevitable changes envisaging another Macedonia, no longer with the preamble of the Macedonian national state, was repeated two days later, at the Conference of Defense Ministers of 13 Southeast European countries in Skopje. Here, too, the impression that Macedonia was unable to provide a military response to the conflict underscored the need for dialogue that should end with a peace agreement.²¹¹⁸

For Macedonia to be tempted "for reforms" and at the same time to get the impression that it had the unanimous support "for the protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity", although the KLA already accepted it and did not need any external guarantees, this was reflected in the ceremony on the occasion of Macedonia's association with the European Union, on April 9, although this demonstration could only remain a word written on paper, if the fighting along the front lines would continue until May 15, as it will remain for little time actually.

However, the international community was near the point of formally approaching the KLA's demands, even though its representatives may not have been a formal part of the negotiating table and the inevitable agreement, and that this point should start with a change of the Constitution, from the preamble, where the definition of the nation-state was to be removed. There were only two alternatives as substitute: that of the two-nation state (Macedonian-Albanian or Albanian-Macedonian), as emerging from Communication No. 6 of the KLA, or of the multiethnic (multinational) state, as it had begun to be whispered through diplomatic corridors and those of international offices from New York to Brussels.

²¹¹⁶ Ostreni, Gëzim: *"Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare"*, Dibër, 2014, pp. 188-189.

²¹¹⁷ *"Fakti"*, 3 April 2001.

²¹¹⁸ *"Fakti"*, 6 April 2001.

The second proposal, on the multiethnic (multinational) principle of citizenship, was quite possible and more realistic, as it softened and devalued the two extremes, the one in force of the Macedonians for the *nation-state* and that of the Albanians - for *the state of the two peoples*.

Indeed, accepting compromise manifested itself in mutual difficulties. On the one hand - for the Macedonians living and acting for ten on the foundations of the nation-state, and this was experienced as a renunciation of a historic achievement from the dictatorship of the Albanian war, which gave the impression that the way was opened to other concessions of this nature. And, on the other hand - for the internationals, who, too, for ten years had accepted and supported a state on erroneous principles of the nation-state, not accepted by the Albanians, a state that they had praised and rewarded in different ways even when it was clear that the power of democracy was being used to discriminate against Albanians in all aspects, which also implied international responsibility for a deliberate mistake that had led to war.

However, the Macedonians already knew that they had to give up, that is, accept either the two-nation state (federalization), or the multiethnic variant. The way it was clear to the Albanian fighters that the Constitution of Macedonia would be changed, that the wording of the Macedonian national state would have to fall, but there would be no federal state on the principle of two nations, for which, in the end, they face responsibility of what was gained from a territorial war returning to the multiethnic state?

It will be the Americans who will be taking care, as “sponsors” of the Macedonian state, as well as supporters of the Albanians in Kosovo, whom they had helped to liberate from Belgrade. With high-level visits by their officials to Skopje and their reception (of President Trajkovski) in Washington, the Americans were demonstrating their commitment to what they had gained in the region, informing both peoples that disagreements and the conflicts between them, could not change this fact. Therefore, they were the ones who would have the final say so that these compromises, or as they were called, reforms, seemed acceptable to all, especially to the Macedonians, involved in the job, staying on it, and retreating, doing so under the dictates of the weapons of the Albanians, for which they were also being charged with the burden of historical guilt of powerlessness to protect their state that came to them as a gift out of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

Thus, the rendezvous of senior US and Macedonian officials in Washington-Skopje relations and vice versa began with the visit of US Secretary of State Colin Powell to Skopje on April 12. The US Secretary of State, after meeting with Trajkovski, Georgievski, and the leaders of the political parties, in the press conference showed the frameworks of the forthcoming dialogue: constitutional reforms and coexistence, which implied equality.

Although the dialogue had not begun, Powell praised the “willingness to coexist and dialogue” by beating the wire where expected. He was also clear about the US commitment and stay in the Balkans, saying “there is no plan to withdraw US troops from the Balkans”, and that “you can be confident in our commitment to political, economic, and military support.”²¹¹⁹

What high-ranking US officials were actually saying in their “closed” talks with Macedonian officials was openly stated by some US congressmen, led by Eliot L. Engel, in a letter to President Trajkovski. It began with the emergence of concern about the situation in the country. Trajkovski was informed that “the concerns of the Albanian citizens of Macedonia, which are already known, should be answered, from the language problem declared in your Constitution that denies the Albanian language as a national language, the minimum inclusion of Albanians in Parliament, low representation in employment, administration and financing of the Albanian university there.”²¹²⁰

²¹¹⁹ “Fakti”, 13 April 2001.

²¹²⁰ Idem.

The letter of the American congressmen ended with the suggestion of an end to the violence, as well as the government's readiness to sit down with the Albanian political representatives to consider all their demands that have brought about the recent crisis.

The card of dialogue with the Albanians, i.e. talks to change the situation and by no means "talks for talks" as the Macedonian government responded when the issue of constitutional changes was opened, was already opened in such a way that it was charged with the responsibility as to how did this situation come about. In a way, these were also emphasized by the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, in Tirana. His message was clear to Skopje that "Albanians everywhere should not be treated as second-class citizens. They should have equal rights as all European citizens."²¹²¹ At the same time, he blamed the Macedonian state for the situation. This was the first statement of this nature, with the Germans appearing critical of official Skopje.

Of this nature was the assessment of the "International Crisis Group for Macedonia", on the occasion of announcing its position on the crisis in Macedonia and its outbreak in an armed conflict. The International Crisis Group for Macedonia on this occasion was critical of Macedonia, for discriminating against Albanians the moment that the Macedonian state had been declared on the principle of a *nation-state*. The International Crisis Group was also critical of the international community, which had acknowledged this. Therefore, the International Crisis Group for Macedonia, categorically demanded that the problematic preamble of the Constitution must be deleted together with other discriminatory references, which *changed the character of the nation-state to that of citizens*, provided that Albanians agreed to it. Also, the general census of the population was requested in order to determine as accurately as possible the demographic reality.²¹²²

On the occasion, the International Crisis Group for Macedonia raised the crucial question of whether Macedonians and Albanians were convinced of coexistence. Or, they should accept a nationalist logic and prepare to talk about federalism?²¹²³

What, however, represented a qualitative turn in the attitude of the international community around the crisis in Macedonia towards addressing the demands made by the KLA when taking up weapons, by which what can be called proactive diplomacy begins the critical approach to the Macedonian state in relation to the Albanians and the catalog of demands addressed to official Skopje regarding the resolution of the crisis, is related to Resolution 9020 of the Council of Europe. Amendments 4, 24 and 26 set out the framework for dialogue in Macedonia, which had to include constitutional reform in order to meet the demands of Albanians, in which case Macedonia's multiethnicity would also determine the character of the multiethnic state.²¹²⁴

It turned out that the issue of changing the preamble of the Macedonian Constitution and changing the character from a *nation-state to a democratic-multiethnic state*, as the only solution that could save Macedonia from internal erosion and also from external challenges, had begun to preoccupy American diplomacy as well as the highest official circles of Washington, which had already been determined for this change, to which support had to be created.

This was also seen during President Trajkovski's visit to Washington trying that the talks opening a few days before in Skopje with US Secretary of State Powell about changing the preamble of the Macedonian Constitution (abolishing the designation of Macedonia as a national state of Macedonians) saying that they changed the identity of Macedonians, which could provoke the reactions of the Macedonians, by which the "calming down of one crisis"

²¹²¹ "Fakti", 15 April 2001.

²¹²² Ostreni, Gëzim: "Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare", Dibër, 2014, p. 366.

²¹²³ Idem.

²¹²⁴ "Fakti", 26 April 2001.

would create circumstances “for the opening of another greater crisis”, and similar excuses, not accepted by the US Secretary of State.

In the face of these attitudes, which official Washington deemed necessary for the crisis in Macedonia to be kept under control as to save the Macedonian state as an American interest, President Trajkovski gave in. He acknowledged that the Constitution should be part of the discussions, acknowledging also that after the assistance provided to the University of Tetova (\$ 10 million), it would become official.²¹²⁵

Political aspect of war – from a two-nation state to a multiethnic state

The American attitudes and the rails it set (the constitutional changes *altering the character of the nation-state into a multiethnic state*, as well as other issues of democratic reforms ensuring institutional equality of all citizens), significantly influenced other international mechanisms, to accept these rails. The OSCE also operated on them, with the task of including Albanian political factors in Macedonia and, indirectly, through them the KLA, as well as political factors in Kosovo and Albania, in order to exploit their influence into reaching an agreement that would end the Macedonian crisis.

This point marks the beginning of the political aspect of the KLA war, as a means to achieve certain political goals, which had to be proclaimed and in accordance with the demonstration of military power and its parameters. If by war, the KLA had managed to show in a short time the *cause of the crisis being the nation-state principle*, on which the Macedonian state was declared without the support of the Albanians, with which the international factor had shown readiness to change the national character of the Macedonian state to a state of citizens, however the KLA, in addition to describing the causes of the crisis and the demand for their elimination, it lacked a stable political platform with which the Albanians would enter into a new contract with the Macedonians for the common state in accordance with their strategic interests, a contract that in the created circumstances had to be supported and guaranteed by the international factor.

On the contrary, it is noticeable that within three months the KLA attitudes had changed in a downward direction: from that of the national liberation war - which was illusory, to the option for the federal state of the two peoples to come down to the option of equality - which was realistic, in the multiethnic state - for which there was no need to fight.²¹²⁶

Although the option of a national liberation war, with the “KLA” acronym, was associated with that of the “Kosovo Liberation Army” (KLA) and, as had happened in the case of the Kosovo war, would soon be abandoned, it nevertheless presented more a psychological effect, in the form of a threat, that if the demands of the Albanians were not taken into account, then this war would follow the liberation direction. These claims were unrealistic in the circumstances when Kosovo was placed under international protectorate, while Albania continued to whirl in the vortex of chaos being good for nothing.

Despite the preservation of “national liberation” acronym, the KLA itself withdrew from the option of a “national liberation war”, and thus the destruction of the Macedonian state, for liberation purposes. In its Press Release No. 6, issued on March 9, 2001, the KLA confirmed Macedonia’s territorial integrity as well as state sovereignty. It even stated that “the KLA had not started a war against the Macedonian state, but for the right of the Albanian people to be an equal part of it”. On this occasion, the Macedonian political elite was blamed for degrading the Albanians into a minority and denying them their historical and ethnic rights. In the Communiqué, the KLA emphasized the request for the state of Macedonia to

²¹²⁵ Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*”, Dibër, 2014, p. 380.

²¹²⁶ See Amendment IV in: “Слузбени весник на Република Македонија”, бр.91, 20.11.2001, Скопје.

change the constitution from that of the Macedonian nation to a two-nation state: Albanian-Macedonian, respectively Macedonian-Albanian.²¹²⁷

The declaration of Macedonia's territorial integrity as well as state sovereignty, however, in those circumstances when the KLA was proving to be a powerful military factor, undoubtedly represented a diplomatic and political victory of the KLA, which would undermine Macedonia's concept of the nation state on which it was built as a state in 1991. But, when it was expected that this request would be forced and materialized with the "capital" of the territories as a fact, it happened that with the Platform of June 14, the KLA at the same time gave up the option for the two-nation Macedonian state, which appeared as a demand on Communication number 6. This sudden withdrawal, which was never properly justified, which rightly raises the issue of inconsistency of political attitudes and possible factors that might have influenced it from outside, paved the way for the option of a multiethnic state in principle, as stated in the Ohrid Agreement, but in practice, based on the symbolism and the Macedonian language as an official language, it would not refute the Macedonian character, except that it would confirm it "by means of war".

It may be said that on the issue the boundaries between the military optimum and the political minimum in the decisive phase, due to the military capital that the KLA had achieved in a very short time and its stable positions in relation to the Macedonian police and military forces, were not met with appropriate political demands (Macedonian federalism, or its cantonization),²¹²⁸ which would prevent the option of "civic equality" from turning into a trap of democracy, as it actually will be.

But even the option of creating a two-nation state, as envisaged in Communication No. 6 of March 9, was too general. He lacked the political project of organizing a two-nation state: Even the option of creating a two-nation state, as envisaged in Communication No. 6 of March 9, was too general. It lacked the political project of organizing a two-nation state: that of federalism, or cantonization, which could be realized with concrete organization of local government in areas where there was military oversight, which shows that the war remained a preoccupation for territories and not for a political and institutional organization of the Albanians in them in accordance with their demands.

This issue highlights, on the one hand, the differences between the Albanian political factor in the process of constituting the Macedonian state on the principle of a nation-state from 1991 onwards about the answer that had to be given in order not to accept the position of the minority, with the alternative of a state-forming people state, and on the other hand, of the military factor's reluctance to use the war and its results first in agreement with the Albanian political factor (such as that of Prizren), and then with the Macedonian political factor and the participation of the internationals *imposing a new contract with the Macedonians about the form of the common state on the principles of full national equality*, that is, of constitutional equality as an equal state-building factor, sanctioned in the preamble of the constitution and by no means of civic equality on the criteria of basic human rights and freedoms in the circumstances of parliamentary democracy, which always depends on majority relations.

If one can briefly say that the behavior of the Albanian factor from the beginning of parliamentarism in Macedonia, in 1990, and the declaration of independence of Macedonia, in 1991, were not in line with the responsibility with which they charged these historical developments in the most drastic cases of discrimination of Albanians on institutional, political, economic, educational, and cultural plain, as well as the exercise of state repression against them when they demanded civic equality instead of turning the issue to the cause of the crisis - denial of the status of state-forming people, this irresponsible behavior of theirs would be repeated by the outbreak of armed conflicts. Either when its importance was not

²¹²⁷ Ostreni, Gëzim: "Ushria Çlirimtare Kombëtare", Dibër, 2014, p. 188.

²¹²⁸ Pettifer, James: "Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës", Tiranë, 2013, p. 279.

properly understood, by joining the propaganda of the Macedonian state to prevent and discredit it in all ways, even when it began to understand the realities that that war, if nothing else, had to present the end of the nation-state concept on which Macedonia's independence was declared. Thus, the abruptness of the concept of nation-state, which appeared inevitable, was not accompanied by a platform for federalization or cantonization of the Macedonian state, which would have as a condition, precisely, the harmonization with the war factor around the political organization of autonomous structures (federal or confederal) in KLA-controlled territories, so that the facts committed by war would materialize politically, in order to achieve federalism or cantonization of Macedonia. The option of organizing the Macedonian state according to the model of federalism or cantonization was not a taboo issue, nor under the burden of the "ruining of the state", which came only from the Albanian side and the "great-Albanian background", as was often said to demonize them. On the contrary, the emergence of a politically exclusionary model, foreseeing instead of federalism or cantonization the division of Macedonia and the exchange of population, came out of the same days from the Macedonian Academy of Sciences.²¹²⁹

The project of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences, which foresaw the division of Macedonia by two municipalities, which would be given to Albania (Dibra and Gostivar) in exchange for some Albanian territories that would be given to Macedonia, although whispered for quite some time, however, turned out to be a trap opposing the KLA's option of organizing Macedonia on the principle of two equal nations: Albanian-Macedonian, i.e. Macedonian-Albanian, namely a federal state. Talks held on that occasion both at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences of Macedonian politicians with President Georgi Efremov on May 30, 2001, and the like in other parts of the country, aimed to open an issue (that of the exchange of territories), initiated by Serbian academics, to justify their hegemonic claims against other peoples (Croats, Bosnia's, and Albanians), which, after the NATO military intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and the entry of Kosovo under the protectorate international, fell into the water.

Although it was absurd for the idea of exchanging territories to be addressed to Albania, when the ethnic Albanians of Macedonia were historically and politically, at least from the late Middle Ages, connected with Kosovo and its problems, with Skopje as their historical capital, nevertheless, it was displaced as such, in the circumstances when the KLA had succeeded with its rapid war (overseeing more than a third of the country's territory), precisely to demonize the possibility of autonomous organization of Albanians in KLA-controlled territories, which could appear as part of the option of a new state organization of Macedonia on these autonomous realities, as had happened with that of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the like, which were not excluded even by the Vance-Owen plan, as proposed by the London Conference in 1992.

Despite the project of Macedonian academics for the partitioning of Macedonia and the exchange of population, which served the Macedonian policy abominating the KLA around the two-nation state (Albanian-Macedonian, respectively Macedonian-Albanian), as well as the confusion it spread in the direction of Albania, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece, to be included in the sharing of the new Macedonian "cake", however the request for territorial political organization, which was completely absent, could certainly be used as a very powerful card in future political talks about the new organization of a common but equal state, for which, at least formally, from March 9, the KLA was also committed.

Instead, the political factor, which participated in Georgijeovski's government (Arben Xhaferi with his party and others around), in support of constitutional changes and by demanding the refrain of formal equality on the platform of "civic equality", causing that position, poured water on the option of the democratic-multiethnic state alone. Whereas, the

²¹²⁹ Ostreni, Gëzim: *"Ushria Çlirimtare Kombëtare"*, Dibër, 2014, pp. 510-514.

KLA military factor, instead of following the option of a two-nation state, as demanded by Communiqué 6, through concrete organization of local autonomous government in the territories it supervised, the more it was strengthened territorially, accompanied it with rhetoric for equality of every community being free, including the use of its own national symbols, similar to those belonging to basic human and civil rights, which created the conditions for the constitutional changes and the reorganization of the Macedonian state to move towards a multiethnic model. This also came out of the KLA Memorandum, dated April 24, 2001, addressing the international community.²¹³⁰

This was also evident in the “Attitudes of the KLA General Staff in Support of Peace”, announced on the occasion of the summit of the Trajkovski Peace Plan, in which the Albanian political parties came up with the Draft Plan for changes to be made based on the KLA demands set out as conditions for the democratization of Macedonia as early as Communiqué 6.²¹³¹

In the communiqué, the General Staff of the KLA finally abandoned the option of Macedonia’s federalism into a *two-nation state*, supporting the model of a *multiethnic state*, which would be achieved through constitutional changes and democratization. On this occasion, the KLA, from a political point of view, gave a stamp to three issues, which are the competencies of the democratic process and reforms within it and not to the war, determining the peace agreement on the following principles:

- that the reforms, for which the Albanians are committed, are aimed at preserving the territorial integrity and the multiethnic character of Macedonia;
- that there is no ethnic territorial solution to the problems in the Republic of Macedonia and that any attempt to ethnically divide the territory harms the citizens of Macedonia and peace in the region; and
- that there is no military solution to the problems in the Republic of Macedonia.²¹³²

The model of a multiethnic state, the third in a row, where the KLA, within four months was finally ended, had reconciled but also united the Albanian political factor (political entities involved in the institutional and parliamentary life of the country since the declaration of independence in 1991) with the Albanian military factor involved in the command-military structures of the KLA outside any platform with which the war of the Albanians would essentially change their position, for which it had even begun.

This reconciliation, in fact, had highlighted the prelude to changing the roles of these factors in the political life of the country, in which case the current actors of institutional and parliamentary life were replaced by warlords, but that this change had come in an “indirect” way in the circumstances when political entities had served as mediators between the Macedonian and international political factor, which had managed the entire negotiation process until the Ohrid agreements.

²¹³⁰ See KLA Memorandum, 24 April 2001. The political representative of the KLA, Ali Ahmeti, wishing to disclose the reasons for the KLA war, issued a memorandum on its behalf, which he sent to Kofi Annan, Lord George Robertson, Romano Prodi (President of the European Commission), and Guemanu Mirce (President of the OSCE), in which he says: “*We took up arms to fight in the ranks of the KLA for freedom, justice, and equality.*” Ahmeti also assures that “*we have no reason to destroy Macedonia. The KLA is committed to preserving the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Macedonia.*” And, “*it is irrelevant to us what it would be called: Macedonian-Albanian or Albanian-Macedonian. What is important is that Macedonia can no longer be a property of one entity, in which Albanians live under segregation just because they are - Albanians. We demand that the Constitution be changed, so that along with the Macedonian language, the Albanian language becomes an official language. We also demand that every community live free, to use its own national symbols.*” (See: Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*”, Dibër, 2014, pp. 375-377)

²¹³¹ The Draft Peace Plan of the KLA General Staff was addressed to NATO on 14 June 2001..

²¹³² See: Attitudes of the KLA General Staff in support of peace in Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kombëtare*”, Dibër, 2014, pp. 589-590).

THE PRIZREN AGREEMENT TURNED THE SUCCESS OF WAR INTO A POLITICAL COMPROMISE

The path of “mediation” talks between Macedonian political entities representing state and parliamentary institutions and KLA military leaders, speaking on behalf of the “General Staff”, had passed through a political agreement reached in Prizren. By this agreement, the KLA will become part of the political process, for which the deserving international factors were committed. But, it must be said that the involvement of the KLA in the political process, albeit with reluctance, was also desired by the Macedonians, who knew that it was the Tetova headquarters that had the last say, a say that according to the March 6 Communication , while defending the territorial and state integrity of Macedonia and the KLA Peace Draft Plan of June 14, In the framework of the constitutional reforms, a multiethnic state was required, for the Macedonians it was welcome, because through it, they would still maintain their dominant positions in the country’s institutions. While the position of the Albanians, although they had fought, could be changed slightly, but not reaching its limits, because the very character of democracy with the power of the majority, prevented this.

However, the Prizren agreement should pave the way for a political solution that everyone had agreed on, which would be reached with the Albanian side through an agreement to end hostilities (war). With the coalition government elected on May 15 taking over, Trajkovski had asked mediator Robert Frowick, the OSCE special envoy for Macedonia, for a “campaign” to end the armed conflict, supposed to pass through an agreement of Albanian political factors in the region - in Macedonia, Kosovo, and Albania, giving Macedonia an “all-Albanian” guarantee of the multiethnicity option in Macedonia, which ruled out the one most dangerous option for Skopje - the two-nation state, as originally requested by the KLA. The agreement of the Albanian political factors in the region, those in Macedonia and Albania, for Frowick as its initiator and the international factor in general would not represent any difficulties. Although the Albanian political factors came from three different political and state realities and different intellectual affiliations, nevertheless, most of them (those from Kosovo and Macedonia) had joint activity in the circumstances of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia committed to the issue of Kosovo in the framework of institutional and armed resistance in the ranks of the KLA war. This activity in recent years (1989-1999), in many respects had taken place in Albania and all had gone through a common political emancipation about what appeared to be the common Albanian interest in the new circumstances, where the Macedonian state, also as the interest of the Albanians, had unanimous support.

In this respect, however, for a part of the intellectuals from Macedonia, incorporated in the parliamentarism and institutional structures of the Macedonian state (internationally recognized by Albania), Tirana had begun to turn into a new reference of political seduction, as it was aided by the state-institutional relations Macedonia-Albania as well as the links they established in the social and political plan of the high levels, although Prishtina still remained an inseparable intellectual and spiritual connection.

Tirana had also started to behave towards the political and social realities in Macedonia in accordance with the state interests and this was reflected in the priorities towards the Albanian partners from the Macedonian political scene, in which case A. Xhaferi and his party DPA, replacing Prishtina for many things with Tirana, had come to the fore, while the connections with the PPD of N. Haliti with pro-Kosovo orientation were removed -

supporter of the option for political and territorial autonomy of the Albanians in Macedonia closely linked to Kosovo, condemned “as nationalistic”.²¹³³

Along with A. Xhaferi, Ali Ahmeti “resided” in Tirana too, settling there from the time of the Kosovo war, inside the “General Staff of the KLA”, engaged in logistical work. As an LPK militant (branch in Switzerland), Ali Ahmeti, together with H. Thaçi, X. Haliti and others belonging to this group, had very good relations with the Albanian socialists, an ideological closeness even going back to the communist regime in Albania. After the Socialists came to power, in 1997, the LPK “Troika” became the main partner of the Albanian government.²¹³⁴

The political link of the Albanian leaders in the Tirana-Prishtina-Skopje triangle, in relation to Macedonia and the role of the Albanians in reaching a peace agreement there, had to restore an “internal cohesion” for them, as had happened during the Rambouillet talks in February and March 1999, with Veton Surroi appearing almost inevitable. As it was known, in the political scene of Kosovo, Veton Surroi appeared from the beginning of political pluralism in 1989, when in Prishtina he tried to establish the pro-Yugoslav party (UJDI), which had failed due to the emergence of the “Democratic League of Kosovo” around which most Albanians would unite. Later, Surroi led the “Kosovo Parliamentary Party” - as a civic alternative, which he will soon hand over to Demaçi and his supporters - opponents of the “Democratic League of Kosovo”. From political parties, Surroi focused on journalism. He founded the “Koha” newspaper and a little later the Publishing House of the same name. As an independent publisher with obvious intellectual skills and political eloquence, Surroi remained a reference to international factors, due to his views that the solution to the Kosovo issue should be found in talks with Belgrade in the form of a compromise, in which the international factor should also participate.

During the escalation of the armed conflicts in Kosovo, from 1997 when the “Kosovo Liberation Army” appeared on the scene, Surroi saw the “*war factor*” as an opportunity for the war of diplomacy to change direction to war diplomacy, as it had occurred when the Contact Group had scheduled the Rambouillet Conference in Paris in February 1999, in which he participated “as an independent” within the Albanian delegation. There he served, at least formally, as a bridge between the institutional wing (Rugova) and the war wing (Thaçi), as it had served the first American contacts (Holbrooke) with KLA representatives in Junik in 1998 together with Fehmi Agani of the LDK. With this same “image” he had participated in the signing of Rambouillet documents (along with Thaçi, Rugova, and R. Qosja). Thus, the help that Surroi was asked from Robert Frowick for “a mediation” between Arben Xhaferi and Ali Ahmeti, the main bearers of the political and military wing of the Albanians of Macedonia, in a way was a return to similar positions among Kosovo Albanians on the eve of the Rambouillet Agreement, driven by the international factor (primarily the Americans) for talks and agreements to end the war conflict in which they were involved, with the only difference being that Rambouillet paved the way for NATO military intervention against Milošević in Kosovo, while the agreement between the Albanians and the Macedonians restored the wounded peace in Macedonia.

²¹³³ Legal action was taken against Nevzat Halimi, Chairman of the Democratic Prosperity Party, who did not support the nation-state option with which Macedonia declared independence in 1991, organizing a referendum on political and territorial autonomy in January 1992. The organizational secretary and several others were imprisoned and convicted on charges of “organizing an armed uprising in Macedonia”.

²¹³⁴ More about the political portrait of Ali Ahmeti within the LPK, the KLA and the family “clan” (uncle-nephew) with Fazli Velia and their ties with Macedonia see at Pettifer, James: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kosovës*”, Tiranë, 2013, pp. 271-277. Pettifer sees Ali Ahmeti’s performance at the head of the Macedonian KLA as “*a great fortune*”, as according to the KLA biographer according to the LPK version, “*Ahmeti is one of the most skilled politicians*” (page 272), who “as a leader of the war in Macedonia” from the ranks of politics was a “*partner*” to the “*moderate*” A. Xhaferi and a Rugova, as was the case with Thaçi in Kosovo, who “*prevented the war wing to impose the option of independence from the very outset*”.

Frowick, Counselor David Foley and Ambassador H. Eiff arrived in Prishtina on May 16, and before meeting with Surroi to give him the confidence to mediate, Frowick and Foley met with Rugova, Thaçi, and Haradinaj, and the KPC Commander, General Agim Çeku. The talks with the latter were of special importance, as Ali Ahmeti came from the same political structures (LPK) as Thaçi, catapulted from “political commissars” to “military commissars”. While the “Chief of General Staff of the KLA”, General Gëzim Ostreni, with the pedigree of a political activist of LPK, came from the high structures of the Kosovo KLA, who, after demilitarization had been involved in the KPC, as commander of an area, from where he had joined the Macedonian war together with many former fighters from the Kosovo war as well as members of the KPC.

Also, a good part of the fighters in the ranks of the KLA brigades in Macedonia were Haradinaj comrades from the Dukagjin area. So only the agreement with the former KLA commanders in Prishtina meant at the same time a green light for the cessation of hostilities in Macedonia. It is said that they all had expressed readiness to help end the armed conflict.²¹³⁵

This was expected after UNMIK had asked the Kosovo leaders of the war side to stop the departure of their comrades from the KLA to Macedonia, while those who were there (Ostreni and others coming from KPC structures), to let be known that they support peace agreements.

After gaining the approval of key leaders in support of the forthcoming Macedonian peace process, Frowick and his entourage also met with Veton Surroi, publisher of “Koha Ditore”, also known for his good connections with Arben Xhaferi, but also with a part of the KLA commanders, to whom he had given support in his newspaper “Koha ditore” during the war.

Surroi had agreed to mediate on condition that the talks did not lead to the partition of Macedonia, as this was against his convictions.²¹³⁶

However, he never needed this condition, because the KLA, since the Communiqué No. 6, had emphasized the protection of the territorial integrity and state sovereignty of Macedonia and more and more often emphasized the constitutional reforms through which the multiethnic state would implement full equality for all.

The idea of meeting in Prizren was not accidental. There were practical-technical reasons (Ali Ahmeti could move freely from his headquarters near Tetova to Prizren, across the belt to the border with Kosovo because he was supervised by his forces) although that part was supervised by American and British KFOR, but there was also historical symbolism, as Prizren was the political center of Albanian nationalism, which had nurtured all Albanian movements for freedom and independence, with the KLA war in Macedonia being viewed by many as such. Therefore, the Albanian agreement in Prizren, in addition to internal reconciliation, also sent messages of union abroad, which even in the circumstances were of special importance, to bestow things being called “historical”, although they were not, with the proper “patriotic” makeup. From what Surroi says in his memoirs, Prizren and its symbolism had presented a motivating impetus for reaching an agreement between the Albanian political and military factor because they considered that they were facing a historical responsibility.²¹³⁷

Indeed, during his first meeting with Ali Ahmeti in Prizren, Surroi says he gained the impression that the KLA was also seeking an end to the conflict through a peace agreement, “demanding that it become part of the political process in a negotiations and the only way this can happen is together with the Albanian political parties”.²¹³⁸

²¹³⁵ Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kombëtare*”, Dibër, 2014, p. 456.

²¹³⁶ For more on meetings in Prizren with Ali Ahmeti and Arben Xhaferi in a bakery, see V. Surroi: “*Libri i Fluturave*”, Prishtinë, 2011.

²¹³⁷ Surroi, Veton: “*Book i Fluturave*”, Prishtinë, 2011, page 106.

²¹³⁸ Idem, p. 106.

As expected, Ali Ahmeti had certain demands to be met for starting the political process. Among them was the presence and deployment of NATO troops in Macedonia, as Albanians had lost faith in one-sided and abused democracy, as well as in the police and military apparatus of the Macedonian state, which had been in the service of repression and violence against Albanians, as seen during the last conflict, when after failures on the front lines, as a sign of revenge, they attacked the settlements of Albanians. Among these conditions were those related to the demilitarization of Macedonia, an amnesty for the KLA members and some others of a technical nature.²¹³⁹

After the first meeting with Ali Ahmeti in Prizren, Surroi had rushed to meet with Frowick in Skopje to inform him about the KLA's demands.

Thus began the mediation between Ali Ahmeti and the special envoy, the American diplomat Frowick, and his associates. It was natural for bilateral notifications to be circulated in high circles and to be conveyed on all sides, especially in the relations between the international mediator and the Macedonian government, which was in a position to be informed "remotely" and at the same time to draft the strategy for the next round of peace talks to begin once ceasefire agreement was signed.²¹⁴⁰

In the second conversation in Prizren, Surroi conveyed Frowick's views to Ali Ahmeti, informing him that two of the three objectives could be achieved: the beginning of the political process, with the built-in demands of the KLA relating this process to that of amnesty for KLA soldiers and the demilitarization of the KLA. What could not be achieved was the deployment of NATO troops in Macedonia as a security force, after which the negotiation process would begin,²¹⁴¹ being clear that such a decision, firstly, required the unanimous position of the North Atlantic Assembly, which was difficult to achieve, and secondly, it required the mandate of the UN Security Council, which depended on the position of Russia and China there.

Surroi's joint meeting with Ali Ahmeti and Arben Xhaferi was also held in the Prizren bakery, where the first meetings had begun. Surroi points out that "the purpose of the meeting was to unify the positions between Ali and Arben to prepare a platform for negotiations to end the war by achieving the realization of the demands of the Albanians, a framework map, which would express the positions of the KLA and would be consensual for the KLA and political parties, and at the same time a process that would move the KLA out of the current impossible position for negotiations, of a 'terrorist organization' towards a position of political legitimacy".²¹⁴²

The following conclusions were brought at the meeting:

- Removal of the preamble of the Constitution;
- Unlimited use of Albanian as an official language in Macedonia;
- Proportional ethnic representation in state institutions;
- Expansion of competencies of municipalities;
- Complete secularization of the State Constitution;
- Establishing consensual democracy in areas related to ethnic rights; that is, preventing majority overvoting in areas directly related to ethnic rights.

It was decided to pay attention to the general amnesty for all those involved in the armed conflict as well as the issue of military service in the ARM within the territory of the municipality of birth.²¹⁴³

The demands emerging from the joint meeting between Ali Ahmeti and Arben Xhaferi with Surroi, to be submitted to Frowick in Skopje, were neither new nor unknown. As such,

²¹³⁹ Idem.

²¹⁴⁰ Idem.

²¹⁴¹ Idem.

²¹⁴² Idem.

²¹⁴³ Ostreni, Gëzim: "*Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare*", Dibër, 2014, p. 462.

they had already appeared in KLA Statement No. 6, in Ali Ahmeti's Memorandum addressed to the international community, as well as in similar statements coming from the KLA Headquarters.

New in this package was only the request for full involvement of NATO in the peace implementation process, which meant the demilitarization of Macedonia, a request that was unrealistic, but could be used for other coordinates.

Frowick asked the KLA to operationalize in writing the content points, suggesting that with them he could go to Trajkovski to start the peace process, and agree to have a brief text once he had talked to Trajkovski.²¹⁴⁴

On May 21, Surroi submitted to Frowick the written offers from the KLA leadership summarized in seven points:

1. Announcing the end to KLA combat operations and the beginning of dialogue at the political level through state institutions with international facilitation, followed by similar statements by the Macedonian authorities;
2. Announcement of amnesty (with a deadline of one month) by the Macedonian authorities, with the exception of suspects and perpetrators of crimes and crimes against humanity;
3. Immediate deployment of unarmed OSCE observers (option: armed with a revolver) in the critical region of Kumanovo (option B: all areas where fighting has taken place, including Tetova);
4. Establishment of the unarmed institutional presence of the Macedonian state (the mayor of Likova, health institutions, etc.) for a period of two months, identical to the position of the OSCE observers);
5. The handing over of KLA weapons to a commission led by the local government of Likova and the OSCE, and then the handing over by the OSCE to the Macedonian security structures;
6. The proclamation of the joint statement of the Albanian political leaders for common goals, which must be achieved through the reform process. Statement also signed by Ali Ahmeti and
7. An announcement by President Trajkovski on the date for the start of negotiations for the reform of Macedonia.

The demands of the Albanian representatives will be significantly revised by Frowick breaking them down into an almost unilateral *action plan*, which would be dealt with mainly by the Macedonian government, while the Albanian side, although a participant in the conflict, remained out of influence. This was also clear by the categorical refusal to mention Ali Ahmeti's name in the conclusions as well as the participation of the fighters in the talks. According to Frowick, Albanian fighters could take part in talks, within any of the political entities (DPA or PPD), only after the KLA ceased operations and was rehabilitated,²¹⁴⁵ which it all left the impression of a capitulation agreement.

As for other issues, especially those related to reforms, Frowick almost ignored the essence of the problem, namely the change of the preamble of the constitution, which should change the concept of *nation-state* to an *equal citizens state*. On this occasion, Frowick insisted that instead of changing the constitution, as Albanians demanded, there should be *constitutional reforms*, and that they should move towards equality of individual and civil rights and equality of individual civic responsibilities, as an opportunity to avoid chronic instability due to the Albanian refusal to accept the 1991 Constitution.²¹⁴⁶

Even the wording "chronic instability", seen from the perspective of "Albanians' refusal to accept the Constitution" highlighted the "guilt" of Albanians and not the main cause

²¹⁴⁴ Idem, p. 465.

²¹⁴⁵ Idem, p. 466.

²¹⁴⁶ Idem.

- the Constitution that discriminated against them and the role of its drafters and adopters - the comprehensive class of Macedonian politics.

Despite Frowick's efforts to "soften" the Prizren talks mediated by Surroi as well as the attitudes from there, they will not be liked by the Macedonian side, which conditioned the future talks with an immediate cessation of hostilities by the KLA and handing over of weapons. President Trajkovski was almost categorical in his request not to remove the "terrorist" designation for KLA fighters and on excluding any participation of Ali Ahmeti in future talks. Trajkovski also demanded that Frowick offer KLA a few days to accept the (ultimate) demands, or be subjected to military attacks, in which case he threatened a general offensive until destruction.

But Frowick, who knew the true strength of the Macedonian police and military forces as well as the KLA's readiness to advance in other areas, as it was more than clear where the Albanians would be brought and how far they could go with compromises, as was clear from the position of the Macedonian government, always relying on what it had received from Surroi and the Macedonian camp, came up with a three-phase operational plan, which was to serve the parties to the conflict as a platform for ending conflicts as well as peace talks, which were to begin immediately.

The plan contained three phases.

The first provided for the establishment of peace, a time-frame when KLA fighters were to hand over all weapons and uniforms to OSCE observers. After handing over their weapons, the fighters could return to their daily lives and the jobs they had. The government would announce the amnesty.

The second phase is envisaged as a *time of good trust*, to strengthen the dialogue. At this stage, the opening of the Stoel University and the launch of a third television channel for minorities is envisaged.

In the third phase, issues of special importance would be negotiated, such as the change of the preamble of the constitution, the use of the Albanian language and others. Assistant Foley announced that the position of the international community to change the preamble of the Constitution is firm:

*"It will all go towards the concept of citizenship, i.e. the definition of Macedonia as a state of all citizens, and not as a state of the Macedonian and Albanian people, as Albanians demand."*²¹⁴⁷

Foley also acknowledged that the three phases of the peace package could remain on paper if no agreement was reached on disarming the KLA, which it would agree to, namely accepting its terms.

Compared to the exclusionary language coming from the Macedonian officials, Foley was more cautious and close to reality, as he knew that the cessation of the conflict, as required by the international factor, could not be achieved by unilateral pressure (on Albanian fighters), but by compromises on both sides, about a new agreement between the two peoples for a common state on the conception of *civic equality*, i.e. a *multiethnic state*, which was also an option of the international community. The new agreement, no matter what it would be called, was conditioned by the preliminary agreement for the cessation of conflicts, i.e. war, which, too, could not be unilateral, as demanded by the Macedonians, nor without the implementation the terms of Albanian fighters to the agreement. As such, if the agreement meant the disarmament of the KLA, it would have to answer many other issues related to this process (amnesty, rehabilitation, employment, social package, and other actions) and by no means a "pardon" or "release from responsibility" for a criminal offense!

And, it will be precisely the issue of achieving a ceasefire and with it the implementation of peace, the breaking point of the whole issue, that would depend not on the

²¹⁴⁷ "Дневник", 23 May 2001.

big words and “threats” coming from President Trajkovski and his military who were able to accomplish anything with their daily offensives being announced to the press day by day, but rather from the point of view of the international factor, specifically the US and NATO, how to deal with the conflict, always keeping in mind that everything should be included in a package for an agreement and by no means an ultimatum to the Albanians for capitulation.

Knowing this, the Albanian political and military representatives in Prizren had focused on their agreement on a peace plan, which would justify the war and the blood that had been shed during those months across the numerous front lines. But at the same time the political realities and those of spheres of interest related to the existence of the Macedonian state would have to be accepted, to be extracted from the “Macedonian ownership” and the “national title-deeds” acknowledged to it by the 1991 Constitution, even on the principle of the multiethnic state, for which general agreement already reigned.

In accordance with these attitudes and despite the language of ultimatums used by the Macedonian government, linking them with military operations (“Ogan” in Runica and “Vaksince”, which had just begun and was used as pressure on the Albanian political and military factor), the political representative of the KLA - Ali Ahmeti, the leaders of the political parties - of the Albanian Democratic Party, Arben Xhaferi, and of the Democratic Prosperity, Imer Imeri, on May 22, 2001, signed the declaration on the peace and reform process in the Republic of Macedonia, known as the “*Prizren Agreement*”.²¹⁴⁸

The agreement reached between the Albanian leaders is based on the following principles:

- Recognizing the fact that the reforms, for which the Albanians are committed, are aimed at preserving the integrity and multiethnic character of Macedonia,
- Recognizing the fact that there is no “ethnic territorial” solution to the problems in the Republic of Macedonia and that any attempt to ethnically divide the territories harms the citizens of Macedonia themselves,
- Recognizing the fact that there is no military solution to the problems in the Republic of Macedonia,
- Recognizing the fact that the process of transformation of the Republic of Macedonia should move towards Euro-Atlantic integration,
- Recognizing the fact that the solution will be found within a local political process with the facilitation of the US and the EU.

Based on these principles, the Albanian leaders of Macedonia are determined to participate in the reform dialogue process, addressing the following issues:

- Amendments to the Constitution of Macedonia,
- Unhindered use of the Albanian language, as one of the official languages of Macedonia,
- Proportional ethnic representation in state institutions,
- Expansion of the competencies of the municipal government,
- Complete secularization of the Constitution-state,
- Establishing consensual democracy on issues related to national rights, that is, restricting the over-voting process in areas directly related to ethnic rights,
- The right to free and unhindered communication in the Albanian cultural space.²¹⁴⁹

The agreement also includes measures to transform the lives of KLA members into various civilian professions, including those within government institutions.

In terms of the demands, the “*Prizren Agreement*” remains within the framework of Communication No. 6 of the KLA of March 9, 2001. It emphasizes the preservation of the state integrity of Macedonia and the multiethnic character of Macedonia. Macedonia’s

²¹⁴⁸ “*Fakti*”, 25 May 2001.

²¹⁴⁹ Ostreni, Gëzim: “*Ushtria Kombëtare Shqiptare*”, Dibër, 2014, p. 472.

multiethnic character should be achieved through a reform dialogue, which will amend the amendments to the Macedonian Constitution, softening the *concept of constitutional changes* and the demand for them in *constitutional reform*.

Other demands, such as the unimpeded use of the Albanian language as one of the official languages in Macedonia, the secularization of the state, the proportional representation of ethnicity in state institutions and the right to unimpeded communication in the Albanian cultural space, which belong to universal basic human rights and freedoms are self-evident in any parliamentary democracy, which shows, on the one hand, the absurdity of state-building on nation-state concepts, such as the Macedonian one, which emerged from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia into a multiethnic reality, and on the other hand, of international acceptance beyond the basic democratic and civilizing criteria, which turns into crisis issues up to war.

This was best reflected in the harsh reactions that came to the Prizren Agreement from the Macedonian state leaders as well as the Macedonian intellectual elite, and those of the international factor.

The response from the Macedonian leaders, no matter how reluctant they seemed, were both expected and of the nature of the conjunctures and for internal needs for the very fact that out of the pressure of the Albanian uprising, the concept of nation-state fell,²¹⁵⁰ on which Macedonia declared independence in 1991, although the multiethnic concept, which appeared inevitable even in the circumstances created by the pressure of the Albanian war, in the main segments (official language, state symbols, anthem and even the official name), the state retained its Macedonian character.

Of a similar nature were also the reactions coming from the international factor, that although appearing as rejecting the Prizren Agreement and what it contained, they referred more to the form than to the content. Moreover, the latter, with some exceptions, in the main points (preservation of territorial integrity and state sovereignty, constitutional reforms with which the Macedonian state is transformed from a nation-state to a multiethnic civic state) maintained the international approach to the crisis in Macedonia. as well as the solution to be given, as unveiled in the main international forums such as the UN Security Council, OSCE, EU and NATO, which were also official positions of the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and other countries, as elaborated in the meetings with the highest officials of the Macedonian state, as well as in the occasional meetings with the Albanian political leaders in Macedonia. These attitudes also came from Albania and Kosovo, although in the role of a simple spectator.

Although the US, France, Germany, and the EU representatives formally asked A. Xhaferi and I. Imeri to withdraw from the Prizren Agreement, as it “turned those who had taken up arms into subject to the agreement”,²¹⁵¹ however, they wanted Albanian leaders to remain in the ruling coalition, emerging as the guarantor of peace talks and future agreements. This constellation was the only one hindering the war alternative.

The Macedonians knew this, too, that although they attacked A. Xhaferi and I. Imeri as “terrorist collaborators” and the like, they were aware that they were inevitable and even useful for the cause itself, because only through them the appearance of Ali Ahmeti in direct talks as well as the legitimating of the war factor would be prevented, which for the Macedonian public was unacceptable, although the fighters as they spoke warned that they

²¹⁵⁰ Among the rhetorical reactions used by the Belgrade regime against the Albanian demands for equality, which had been unfolding since 1968, 1991, and onwards, for the status of the Republic of Kosovo in the Yugoslav federation, was that of Kiro Gligorov - the ideologue of the Macedonian state national team. He harshly condemned the Prizren Agreement with the following words: “The event taking place in Prizren and the open definitions I cannot comment otherwise than an introduction to the construction of our country (Macedonia) as a binational state, in order to secede the Republic of Macedonia to annex it to Kosovo or to realize the idea of for the creation of an Albanian state in the Balkans.” (See: Глигоров, Киро: “Македонија е се што имаме“, Скопје, 2002, p. 594).

²¹⁵¹ “Fakti”, Shkup, 24 May 2001.

would engage in politics. The Macedonians also knew that with the declaration of the KLA for the protection of the territorial integrity and state sovereignty of Macedonia, as well as their withdrawal from the demand for a *two-nation state*, namely federalization, they had succeeded in turning their defeat in the military plan into a political victory, also for the very fact that the slogan of national discrimination, of state violence against Albanians, “of democratic terror”, and above all of the degradation of the Albanians to a minority and others with which the Albanian uprising had started in Tanusha spreading rapidly to other areas, had shrunk to the fact that Macedonia is fighting for reforms, fight for equality”,²¹⁵² giving the whole issue the dimension of “mistakes during the state-building process”, which could be corrected by agreement, as it would happen with that of Ohrid.

And, since a *modus operandi* had been reached for “democratic reforms” to cure the “mistakes of democratic transitions”, as Skopje media propaganda was beginning to claim,²¹⁵³ as the KLA saw the whole issue on a “recipe for reforms and the multiethnic state”, and not on the constitutional changes, was expected that the Macedonians would use the “intermezzo” between “war and peace” to turn the Albanian military factor, as it had given up the demands that would threaten the Macedonian state and no longer posed a threat to its fragmentation and other dangers that could come to it, as weak as possible, and by it the Albanian political factors that spoke with their language during peace talks.

This will actually be clear with the military operations continuing as soon as the “Prizren Agreement” was announced, with “Vaksince” in the village of Vaksince, on May 24, 2001 and the fighting in Mateç over the next three days and others during the following days when Sllupçan, Hotel, and Orizore were attacked.²¹⁵⁴

In these war operations, although without consequences for the KLA, which had still maintained its positions and in some parts had even advanced, the population had suffered. The Macedonian police and military forces, with the help of artillery, had deliberately bombed the Albanian settlements, their houses and properties killing even their cattle. Public infrastructure was not spared either. The danger posed by the spread of the war in urban areas, the “cleansing” operations that were carried out, had forced many residents to leave war zones to other parts of the country, but also in the direction of Kosovo.²¹⁵⁵

KLA’s response to these hostilities had been defensive and prudent in nature, moving forward in strategic directions without endangering the population and their property. Such were those in the region of Derven and Skopje, especially in the direction of Haraçina, from where the main points around Skopje and in the direction of Kosovo were monitored, which would have to exert further pressure on the international factor supporting the Macedonian forces.

The fighting actions of the Macedonian police and military forces trumpeted as a final offensive against the KLA positions for its destruction, which no one believed, actually harmed the Albanian population of the areas declared war zones in order so that they would move out paying the “cost” of armed rebellion. But the smoke coming from there, as well as the images of the propaganda war, will serve Trajkovski for announcing the “Peace Plan”, expressing the idea that further developments should be directed on two tracks: the agreement on political reforms, according to the demands of the KLA, to be made with the Albanian political parties PPD and DPA, provided that they follow the path of action against

²¹⁵² See a statement by General Gëzim Ostreni, Chief of General Staff of the KLA to the “Fakti” newspaper on 1 June 2001.

²¹⁵³ See commentary “*Demokracia si zhvillim dhe sfidat e bashkëjetesës*” (“*Democracy as development and the challenges of coexistence*”), in “Дневник” of Skopje, 2 June 2001.

²¹⁵⁴ See reports of fighting in Sllupçan, Mateç, Orizore, and surrounding areas in “Fakti”, May 27, 2001. The newspaper also reports on the use of chemical poisons.

²¹⁵⁵ “Дневник”, 29 May 2001: The Macedonian Red Cross estimates that the number of displaced persons from these parts reached 13,895: 121,097 from the Kumanovo and Likova region, 2,420 from Skopje-Montenegro, and 1,394 from Tetova.

the KLA and the idea of eliminating the KLA with the use of force". This four-phased plan was to last no more than a month and a half.²¹⁵⁶

In these circumstances, as Skopje had started to abuse the readiness of the Albanians for painful compromises, what they had actually done with the Prizren Agreement, on June 11, KLA units entered Haraçina, a settlement at the entrance of Skopje.

These spectacular operations of the Albanian fighters that almost turned to the war strategy, finally convinced the international community that the Macedonian state, despite big words, was not able to give the armed conflict with the KLA a military response, that is, to win the war, as it spoke incessantly. On the contrary, it became clear that the KLA was able to continue the war successfully and in accordance with it, if necessary, return to the maximalist demands: the federalization of Macedonia on the principles of a two-nation state, or cantonization .

It was Haraçina, therefore, being clearly that the Albanian fighters were able to turn the war into a tool of politics even by initiating demands that would be supported by facts (internal division of Macedonia in accordance with "Ilirida") that gave an answer to the end of the war and the start of peace talks to be concluded with the "Ohri Framework Agreement", signed in Skopje on 13 August 2001.

What happened from mid-June to the beginning of August until the final signing was just part of an international (NATO-EU) scenario, which needed an epilogue where war should not turn into success, nor peace in defeat, but in a political normality useful "for all". From this point of view, one should also look at what was happening in Macedonia within seven months, opening the doors to three developments:

- a) NATO's entrance to Macedonia,²¹⁵⁷
- b) The redefinition of the Macedonian state from a nation state to a multiethnic citizen state, although the wording would preserve the Macedonian character with the reformulation in the Macedonian Parliament,²¹⁵⁸ and
- c) Consent of Albanians to the new political realities in the Macedonian state, remaining almost the same as before the war.

²¹⁵⁶ Ostreni, Gëzim: "Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kombëtare", Dibër, 2014, p. 550.

²¹⁵⁷ One day after the Ohrid Agreement, on August 14, 2001, through the mediation of NATO Ambassador Peter Faith, another agreement was signed between the KLA political representative, Ali Ahmeti, and the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, on the amnesty of KLA fighters and its disarmament. On the same day, international experts arrived in Skopje to begin work on collecting weapons from former KLA fighters. This operation was called "Essential Harvest" and had to be carried out by 3,500-5,000 NATO troops. (See: Rexhepi, Zeqirja: "Zhvillimet politiko-shoqërore të shqiptarëve në Maqedoni, 1990-2001" ("Political and social developments of Albanians in Macedonia, 1990-2001"), p. 202).

²¹⁵⁸ On November 16, 2001, the FYROM Parliament adopted the decision to announce amendments IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X-XVIII of the Constitution of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Amendment IV amended the Preamble of the Constitution. The preamble deprived Macedonians of the exclusive right to the state of FYROM, in which case not only Macedonians, but also Albanians and other ethnic communities became constitutive elements of the state. But, with this change, even in the circumstances of the multiethnic civic state, the character of the Macedonian national state was preserved, as reflected with the national symbols and the official language (Macedonian), while the Albanians and the rest, being treated "as part" of a people, were excluded from their external ethnicity. This is reflected in the wording, which underwent a change from what was proposed in the Ohrid Agreement, by which the agreement was violated by the Parliament, i.e. by the principle of parliamentary majority, which brought the crisis in Macedonia for which the Albanians used war:

"The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, as well as the citizens living on its borders who are part of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Roma people, the Bosniak people and others, taking the responsibility of the present and the future of their homeland, aware and grateful to their ancestors for the sacrifices and in support and the struggle for the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia as an independent and sovereign state and responsible to future generations for the preservation and development of everything that is valuable, from the tradition of cultural and coexistence in Macedonia, equal in their rights and obligations towards the common good - the Republic of Macedonia, in accordance with the tradition of the Republic of Krusevo and the decisions of ASNOM and the referendum of September 8, 1991, decided to establish it as an independent, sovereign state, in order to establish and strengthen the rule of law to guarantee human rights and freedom of citizens, to ensure peace and coexistence, social rights, economic prosperity and progress of individual and collective life, through representatives in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia elected in free democratic elections." (See: "Службени весник на Република Македонија", бр.91, 20 октомври 2001, Скопје).

Evidently, the biggest beneficiaries were the military leaders of the KLA, from the legacy of the “People’s Movement of Kosovo” (LPK), Swiss branch, which as in the case of the Kosovo war, will replace the weapons handed over with those of political party posts, by getting included in the political life of the country.

Ali Ahmeti’s “Democratic Integration Party” (PDI) will win the first elections of the “multiethnic state” and thus managed, with the halo of the “war party”, to take political primacy and Arben Xhaferi to continue where he had left - turning into part of the institutional mechanisms led by Macedonian politicians without being able to change the situation for which it had been fought, which from this point of view, this war, makes this war unfinished.

CONCLUSION

Dealing with the Kingdom of Macedonia from antiquity, as well as its appearance in time and space, necessarily highlights the most important factors of a civilization, the concepts of which were the ideas of world universalism on a philosophical, social and political plain, reflected best and uniquely with the World Empire of Alexander the Great. While dealing with the Macedonian state, created by Tito in the twentieth century in the framework of his concept of Yugoslavia of AVNOJ, also highlights the political factors that influenced the emergence of this state as a geostrategic conjuncture from the Eastern crisis onwards.

Although the World Empire of Alexander the Great was politically incapable of meeting the challenges of the time, which as such failed at the state level, it nevertheless remained a model of a major idea which, although by Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers rose to the paradigm of the Best Empire, however as a model of political and state power, in various forms, was followed by his descendants: Pyrrhus Molossus, Constantine the Great, Justinian, and even George Kastriot - Skanderbeg.

When it comes to important kings and emperors who followed the political image of Alexander the Great and his followers, the aspect of ethnic, social, and political connection with the Kingdom of Macedonia is taken into account, as well as the fact that it was part of the Pelasgian-Illyrian world. In certain circumstances, such as those of the great changes taking place from the 4th-10th centuries with the influx of peoples from Egypt and different directions in its basin stretching across the Eurasian space, which also led to the dispersal of its political power and shifting in different directions (Mediterranean and Asia Minor), the Kingdom of Macedonia took over the restoration of a scattered and lost power that once the Dardanian Troy, the Bryge Empire and the inevitable Hittites had as associated with the preceding Dardanian mold.

The capture and subjugation of the city-states: Athens, Sparta, and their entry under the Macedonian kingdom, as well as the direction of Alexander the Great from the East to Persia and further to India, where he thought the border of the World was located, were not accidental, but part of the concept of the World Empire of the Pelasgian mentality, which needed an internal and external political connection pursuant to the ideas of its civilization.

Thus, the model of the World Empire, as a political concept, and universalism as its philosophical idea, turn the Kingdom of Macedonia of Alexander the Great into the center of antiquity, on which what will be called Hellenism was born.

This fact, however, changes the appearance, but also the content of what as a civilization, but also a one-sided political model is attributed to the Greeks and Greece, thus excluding its main factors: the Pelasgian-Illyrian world and its ethnic, historical, and political cradle, from which Hellenism absorbed the mentality, tradition, and all the values with which Hellenism was enriched as a universal civilization.

In this respect, the Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great, appropriated by nineteenth-century political Greece as well as Hellenism, which was unilaterally declared a Greek civilization, becomes its “reference”, rather than the opposite, that Hellenism emerged from Peisistratus henceforth, to be seen as the heritage of the Pelasgian-Illyrian world, and hence of the Macedonian as a typical representative of its power when it was almost in the last throes of external invasions (Egyptian and other), which significantly affected the social and political relations in its basin.

The one-sided misappropriation of Alexander the Great’s Macedonia by the Philohellenists of the last century and its placement in the center of ancient Greece for political purposes as were those relating to the European Renaissance on the models of free ancient civilization, despite numerous testimonies of authors that Macedonia as well as Dardania and the Illyrian world in general were part of the Pelasgian world, the presence of which, although politically dispersed, was evidenced even at the time of the emergence of Hellenism, damaged the ancient civilization itself and its complexity. Because, this detachment left many of the constituent factors of antiquity ignored: those ethnic, cultural and others, declared “indigenous” or, whenever they could not be overcome scientifically, were unilaterally described as “paleo” (old), with which the inheritance seemed to be accepted, but out of influence in it.

This view, in addition to helping maintain the contested views of Indo-European and its outdated schemes in many respects, also froze the equally contested views about the influx of peoples in the Eurasian space and the emergence of civilizations coming from these developments, in which case the model of Arianism had to amputate the connection of Hellenism with the Balto-German world with the latter even seen as crucial in its formation! These theories, which did not escape a racist approach, began to be scientifically “absorbed” only by assessing and restoring the Pelasgian factor to the foundations of Hellenism as an ancient civilization and not its one-sided denial of the “fear” that the cradle of ancient civilization should sought in the Mediterranean and Eurasian space, where the Pelasgian-Dardanian-Illyrian factor connects the Sumerian-Semitic world with Arianism. Therefore, it is no coincidence that some German and other scientists (Hahn, Grossman, Müller, Fallermayer, Milan Budimir, and others) will be dissatisfied with the fetish of Arianism interpreted in accordance with political philhellenism, raising the thesis of Pelasgian antiquity - cradle of ancient civilization, where the Illyrian-Thracian world was seen as interconnected and by no means detached from Hellenism based on the exclusivity of the Greek factor. In accordance with this view stand also the studies of the Albanian revivalists: Kamarda, De Rada, Skripti, Skiroi, S. Fashëri, G. Adhamudhi, P. Vasa, and others, who supported the Pelasgian-Illyrian link.

In this respect, ancient Macedonia plays a special and very significant role from the ethnic, cultural and socio-political point of view, because on the one hand it highlights the Pelasgian-Illyrian factor, as its inseparable historical part, while on the other hand, highlights its continuity with the Albanian world in the form of a political and state identifying model from the time of the Mollosian kingdom of Pyrrhus, the Kingdom of Dardania, the Illyrian Kingdom, to the Kingdom of Gjergj Kastrioti-Skanderbeg. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Pyrrhus also identified with Alexander the Great, as did Skanderbeg,

who was not accidentally named King of Epirus and Macedonia centuries later, and his head-gear (goat horns) symbolized Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus the Mollosian.

In a way, identifying with the ideas of the World Empire, and with the Christian factor as part of the "divine power", appear the Dardanian-Illyrian emperors, Constantine the Great and Justinian, who laid the foundations of Byzantium, turning the power of the Empire into East, in Byzantium (near the former Dardanian Troy), and from there, for another ten centuries extending its political and cultural power from East to West.

The fall of Byzantium in the 15th century and the rise of the Ottoman Empire to the foundations of its political and spiritual capital - Constantinople, although Western civilization faced the Islamic invasion as a new reality that was taking its place from the spiritual and historical center seemingly returning in the war of civilizations, however, it was the work of Gjergj Kastriot-Skanderbeg (thirty years of war against the Ottoman Empire), who, invoking Epirus and Macedonia, identified his Kingdom with the main pillars of ancient civilization - as the center of the anti-Ottoman war, from which Western civilization would be defended, but also restoring the lost East (Constantinople).

Although under the royal emblem of Skanderbeg and his war the name Macedonia from the ethnic notion associated with the historical Pelasgian-Dardanian-Illyrian basin, in the twentieth century it turns into a geographical notion for political purposes, nevertheless from the late Middle Ages to the time of Macedonia continues to be part of the Arber-Albanian world in social, cultural and political terms. In the early Middle Ages, during Byzantium and later during the Roman Empire, the entire area of Macedonia was included within Illyricum. Its administrative and ecclesiastical organization, in the time of Constantine the Great and Justinian, is found within the vicarage of Dardania and later under the Theme of Scupi. In the administrative organization of the Ottoman Empire, the area of Northern Macedonia is mostly included in the provinces and later the vilayets of Arnautlik, most of which are located in the Sanjaks of Shkup, Manastir, and Prishtina. With the administrative reform of the 19th century, most of Northern Macedonia was first included in the vilayet of Shkup and later that of Kosova, and Manastir. In the Vilayet of Kosova, with Shkup as its capital, most of Northern Macedonia would remain until 1912, when it was occupied by the Serbian and Greek armies during the Balkan wars.

The turn of the Balkan Wars (Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian invasions) as well as the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, although turning Northern Macedonia (most of which lay in the Vilayet of Kosova and the rest in the Vilayet of Manastir) into war booty of the neighboring states (Serbia and Greece), played a very important, even decisive role in the declaration of independence of Albania, on November 28, 1912, as an inevitable political reality, which, although not to be taken into account within its ethnic borders, will be returning to the new European state map.

This historical role of Northern Macedonia within the Vilayet of Kosovo and partly that of Manastir, together with the nucleus of Dardania, was of a political as well as cultural nature, on which the political platforms of Albanian nationalism were built and developed and the struggle for independence directed from the Albanian League of Prizren in 1878, by which even in 1881, with the Provisional Government of the Albanian League in Prizren, the Albanian state was restored being collapsed after the death of Skanderbeg. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908, crowned with the demands of the Ferizaj Assembly, which overthrew Hamidian absolutism and brought the new Turks to power, as well as the Kosovo uprising of 1912, in which case, with the fourteen well-known points of Hasan Prishtina's agreement with the Ottoman Empire, practically the so-called "Ottoman Albania" was created, with epicenter being a part of Northern Macedonia and that of Dardania.

Thus, on the one hand, the alphabet of the Albanian language in Manastir, in 1908, and on the other hand, Shkup as a military and political center of the Albanian uprising of 1912, which was liberated by the Ottomans in August of that year whereupon the political and

military of the Albanian factor was displayed as inevitable in those crucial circumstances, turned into a historical emblem of Albanianism, which gave an indelible stamp to the Albanian state formation.

Of course, the political reality, produced by the Conference of Ambassadors of London in 1913 (recognition of the halved Albania and the remnant of Kosovo and thus most of northern Macedonia under Serbian occupation and that of the Vilayet of Janina under the Greek), official Albania had to become a state reality within the London borders, while the parts separated from the Albanian ethnicity, sharing the fate of “minorities”, were finally erased from their internal political and cultural connection.

Therefore, not coincidentally, two of the emblematic parts of Albanianism under Serbian occupation (Shkup - the capital of Kosova and Manastir - the center of linguistic nationalism) turned into its deniers. Thus, Belgrade, starting from “Načertanije” and the platforms emerging from it (Vasa Čubrilović’s Memorandum, and similar ones from the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the Serbian Orthodox Church), turned Shkup into the center of Islam, while Manastir into a center of Slavic Orthodox identity.

These two actions were followed by state programs, from those of ethnocide: the violent displacement of Albanians to Turkey followed by state agreements with Turkey and the colonization of Albanian lands with Serb and Montenegrin populations) as well as cultural genocides: denial of Albanian language, denial of national identity, and its replacement with “Muslim” religious identities associated with “Turkish” nationality.

In this respect, in order to take away any national and political identity, Shkup (Skopje) - as the historical capital of the Albanians - turned into an “Islamic” center. To lose any Albanian trace in it, Belgrade opened Islamic religious schools in Shkup (Skopje) and other cities in the former Kosova Vilayet. It opened the Grand Madrasa in Skopje and founded the Association of Muslims of Serbia “Cemiyet”, which took over their political organization with a “green government”.

In addition, the Orthodox Albanians underwent full assimilation, who, in parts of northern Macedonia and Kosovo, were declared as “Serbs”. Similarly, in Tito’s time, they were declared Macedonians.

Despite these state reprisals and programs to eradicate ethnic and cultural Albanian identity, Albanians did not give up being Albanian. This was reflected in the ongoing resistance to the armed one, as well as the use of historical circumstances, such as those between 1915-1918 and 1941-1944, to join the Albanian ethnicity. The same will be done from 1944 onwards, against the Slav-communist reoccupations and the realities they brought with the creation of Tito’s Yugoslavia until 1991, when it disintegrated and the Albanians will be found again in a context of new conjunctures: in Macedonia within the independent state of Macedonia, while in Kosovo under Belgrade’s reoccupation.

The proclamation of an independent Macedonian state in 1991 on the principles of the nation-state, i.e. as a national state of the Macedonians, as well as the inclusion of Albanians in it as a minority against their will, although they will boycott the September 1991 referendum, this reality did not disturb its legitimacy.

Although a little later the Albanians through a referendum, in 1992, will declare the autonomous republic of “Ilirida”, however this did not change the political reality, as this determination was not followed to the end and by all means as to the reasons related to Kosovo and the danger that the destabilization of Macedonia could bring there, which Belgrade also wanted for its own account, and as much from the conformism of a part of the Albanian political factor, accommodated in state structures personally benefiting from government posts up to ambassadors (though without any political influence). This made the Macedonian state as such, i.e. a national one, continued to be supported internationally and even to be taken “as an oasis of peace”.

This “idyll” nevertheless suited the nationalist Macedonian policy, as it thus achieved two goals: detaching of the Albanians from Kosovo and the well-known cultural and spiritual connection with it established between 1968-1981, as well as their “reconciliation” with the Macedonian national state by being treated as a minority, which would at the same time keep them separate from Kosovo as well as Albania.

This situation, however, began to be disturbed as soon as Kosovo came under international protectorate in June 1999. Its release from the Serbian occupation and the deployment of NATO troops in it, changed the Macedonian “idyll”. Albanians, discriminated against by “parliamentary democracy”, in early 2001, launched an uprising, which quickly spread from Tanusha to Albanian-inhabited areas. The bearer of this war was the “National Liberation Army”, a sister of the “Kosovo Liberation Army”, not only for the participation of many fighters in the Kosovo war, but also for the concept that “war becomes the final means of politics”.

Thus, the KLA war, from February to August 2001, started with the motto of national liberation, continued with the demand for a two-nation state (Albanian-Macedonian, respectively Macedonian-Albanian), suddenly narrowed to the demand for common democratic-civic, multiethnic state.

With this request, things reached the Ohrid Agreement of August 2001, which, internationally, laid the foundations for the citizens state of Macedonia, where, however, Macedonia, with the official Macedonian language and the Macedonian state symbols, retained the Macedonian national character, but under a citizen state firm.

However, the Albanian war in Macedonia, although it ended without any political success, nevertheless internationalized its issue to such an extent that the existence of the Macedonian state was seen as closely linked to the relations of the Albanians with it, which can always determine its fate, if they will not be treated as its real owner, i.e. as state-forming in possession of historical and ethnic title-deeds.

Therefore, with that in mind, this war remains unfinished.

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Hoxha, Hafiz Alia:
Hoxha, Sait:
Hoxha, Din:
Haxhiu, Adil bej:
Hakiu, Ibrahim:
Halili, Bexhet:
Hamza, Xhevdet:
Hullic:
Hibert, R:
Halili, Nevzat:
Haliti, Xhavit:
Harapi, Anton:
Hasani, Sheh:
Hitler, Adolf:
Hotla, Sylë:
Hamza, beu:

I

Idens:
Iliri:
Isokrati:
Isaku III:
Ipsilanti, Alexiosandër:
Ibrahimi, Gurrshari:
Ibra, Ali:
Ippen, konsull austriak:
Idrizi, efendi Gjakova:
Ismaili, Enver beu:

Ivanaj, Nikollë:
Ilo, Spiro:
Imeri, Jusuf:
Imer, Imeri:
Ivanov, diplomat rus:
Iden:
Ibrahimi, Nuredin:

J

Jokl, Norbert:
Jafeti:
Jovan, peshkop:
Justiniani, perNDSHr:
Justini, perNDSHr:
Juliani, perNDSHr:
Jordani:
Johani i Kapadokisë:
Joviani:
Jezui (Krishti):
Jamani, Dhimitër:
Josifi, patriark:
Jorko, Nikolla:
Jelinac:
Juka, Idriz:
Jusufi, Sali:
Jastrebov I:
Jashari, K:
Jovanoviq, Pavle:
Jonuzi, Nebi:

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Kadmi:
Kamarda, Dhimitër:
Karaxhiq, Vuk:
Kaic:
Kroni:
Krispi, Xh:
Kliti:
Kelmendi, Ibrahim profesor:
Kurioni, Gai:
Konstandini i Madh:
Konstanci, perndor:
Kosomos:
Khursavi I:

Konstandini, knjaz i Velbuzhit:
Kantakuzeni V:
Kantakuzeni, Tomas:
Kopiliqi (Kopili) Milesh (Milosh):
Krasniqi, Mark:
Kazazi, Gjon Nikollë:
Krispi, Sepe:
Kavaliotu, Th:
Karaxhorxhe, Petroviq:
Karaxhorgjeviq, Alexiosandar:
Kanthos:
Kallakotroni, Th:
Kunnduripti, G:
Konica, Faik:
Kryeziu, Riza:
Kolonja, Shahin:
Kazazis, Neoklis:
Kadriu, Abyl:
Kristoforidhi, K:
Krispi, Josip:
Kaçori, Nikollë:
Kaloveli, Riza:
Kola, Preng:
Kondilleri, Stefan:
Kruja, Mustafa Aziz:
Kral, konsul:
Kryeziu, Riza:
Kolonja, Sylejman:
Kaçori, Nikollë:
Karburana, Dedë:
Koprencka, Xhelal:
Krasojeviq, R:
Kadri, Hoxha Prishtina:
Kaja, Rakip Begjeti:
Karabergu, Ismet:
Kurti Sadik:
Krasniqi, Rexhep:
Këpuska, Mazllum:
Kupi, Abaz:
Kolaj, Prenk:
Kurtaga, Adem:
Kardelj, Eduard:
Kolishevski, Lazar:
Kabashi, Hasan:

Kajolli, Hazir:

L

Lazari, princ:
Lykani:
Lippich:
Laurent:
Longari, mbret:
Livi, Tit:
Luc, Amici Gali:
Lukiani:
Leopni, papa:
Leoni II:
Lauri:
Ludoviku, mbret:
Leopoldi I:
Lajbnic, filozof gjerman:
Loka, Cen:
Leskoviku, Ali:
Leskoviku, Halit:
Lita, Mustafa:
Laurasi, Petro Nino:
Libohova, Myfti bej:
Ludwig, Radnay von:
Limoni, Xhavit:
Luzha, Asim:

Y

Ypi, Ferat:
Ymer, Prishtina:

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Makedoni:
Mikloshiq:
Meyer, Gustav:
Magodi:
Meshor:
Mouni, mbret:
Magrec:
Mauricis, perNDSHr:
Maria:
Mistiku, Nikolla:
Metodi:
Maniaku:

Murati, sulltan:
Mehmedi, sulltan:
Mahmudi, II, sulltan:
Mehmedi, II, sulltan:
Mihaili, Dioklesë:
Murzufski, duka:
Manueli III:
Manfredi:
Muzaka, Gjin:
Muzaka, Karl:
Muzaka, Manuel:
Muzaka, Andrea:
Muzaka, Teodor: Muzaka, Gjon:
Muzaka, Maria:
Martini, VI:
Millutin, Uroshi II:
Marko, Kraleviq:
Mircea, V:
Matranga, Lekë:
Mejkashi, Nikollë:
Mustafa, Hoxha:
Mavrokordasi:
Mehmed, Ali Pasha:
Molotov:
Mjeda, Ndre:
Mjeda, Juk Simon:
Mitrovica, Xhelal:
Mitrovica, Xhavit:
Mihajloviq, Drazha:
Marana, Azem:
Mojsov, Lazar:
Marma, Rrustem:
Meksi, Kristo:
Markoviq, M:
Maksuti, Ali Mehmed:
Musa sheh Zade:
Mahmutogku, S:
Maçek, S:
Mermëllaku, Adem:
Muzani, Filip:
Muderizi, I:
Muderizi, Abedin:
Muderizi, Mehmed Hamdi:
Muderiziu, Avdyl:

Mehmedi, Aqif:
Murati, Musli:
Muravjev:
Moissa, F:
Mitko, Thimi:
Mejza, Hasan:
Mjeda, dom Ndre:
Mole, Dhimitër:
Maksuti, Behaedin:
Maxharr, Beu:
Marash, Gjek:
Millanoviq:
Moni, Bajram:
Mehmedi, Halil:
Myhtar, Pasha Gazi:
Minga, Josif:
Mbroja, Dhimitër:
Millutuinoviq, Ivan:
Mugosha, Dushan:
Maklin, Bill:
Millosheviq, Slobodan:

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Nazika, Kemal:
Naserti:
Nemanja, Stefan:
Nemanja, Dushan:
Nemanja, Urosh II:
Naumi:
Nikolla, prift:
Nikolla, kont:
Noli, Fan Stilian:
Nikolla II, car:
Nazemi, Hysen:
Novakoviq, Stojan:
Naço, Nikolla:
Naçi, Naum:
Naçi, Lonidha:
Njaziu, Ahmet, kolonel:
Nosi, Zef:
Nikolla, mbret i Malit të Zi:
Neziri, Sefer:
Neshiq, Angjelko:
Nivica, Sali:

Nimani, Elhami:
Nojbaher, Herman:
Nasi, Lef:;
Nikçi, Ismail:
Nediq:
Nimani, Xhavit,
Nushi, Gogo:

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Osmani, Ramush:
Omari, Bahri:
Oven, lord:
Orisi:
Ostir:
Oktaviani, August:
Orbin, Mario:
Obrenoviq, Millosh:
Otto, i Bavarisë:
Osmani, Xheladin:
Orllov,konsul:
Osteni, Gëzim:
Okllanim, Hysen aga:

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Pavllacini, diplomat:
Peci, Sotir:
Predika, mbret:
Predika II:
Puskarius, S:
Pirro, Molosi:
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Ptolemeu IV:
Pleurati, mbret:
Perseu, mbret:
Pines, mbret:
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Projekt, peshkop:
Pauli:
Peza, Myslium:
Popoviq, Miladin:
Popoviq, Koça:
Papa, Gazeli I:
Papa, Simah:
Protera, peshkop:

Porphyrogenti:
Papa, Grigori II:
Paleologu, Gj:
Papa, Urban II:
Papa, Benedikti III:
Papa, Klementi III:
Papa, Hoorius III:
Papa, Inocienti IV:
Papa, Gërguri X:
Papa, Nikolla II:
Papa, Eugjeni V:
Papa, Piu II:
Papa, Kalderosi III:
Paleologu, Mihael:
Pasha, Kasim:
Pasha, Hasan:
Pasha, Hysein:
Pasha Ali, Tepelena:
Pasha, Selimi III:
Pasha, Avdurrahman:
Pasha, Hivzi:
Pasha, Omer:
Pasha, Mahmut Reshat:
Pasha, Mahmut Tuzlla:
Pasha, Hafiz:
Pasha, Osman:
Pasha, Zija:
Pasha, Et'hem:
Pasha, Tefik:
Pasha, Shemsi:
Pasha, Reshad Akif:
Pasha, Hilmi:
Pasha, Ali Riza:
Pasha, Hasan Riza:
Pasha, Mehmed Shefqet:
Pasha, Ferat:
Pash, Mehmed Ferit:
PashA, Mehmed Said:
Pasha, Fezil:
Pasha, Haki:
Pasha, Xhavit:
Pasha, Rifat:
Pasha, Shefqet Turgut:
Pashiq, Nikolla:

Popoviq, Zhivko:
Prodani, Haxhi:
Prizreni, Jahja:
Pojani, Sami:
Pira, Islam:
Pejani, Bedri:
Panjevac, B:
Pema, Gjoko:
Prebiqueviq, Svetozar:
Pavle, knjaz:
Peçanac, Kosta:
Prishtina, Qemal:
Prishtina, Hasan:
Popoviq, Miladin:
Pejqinoviq, Jovo:
Pauell, K:
Parina, Pol:
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Prizreni, Ymer:
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Quku, Faik:
Qirili:
Qazimi:
Qemali, Ismail:
Qypriliu, Mustafa:
Qiriazhi, Gjergj:

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Reçaku, Iliaz:
Rugova, Ibrahim:
Radiq, Stjepan:
Ramadani, Ramadan:
Rudell, R:
Robertson, Xhorxh:
Ribezo, F:
Rozher, mbret:
Raimond, kont i Tuluzit:
Robert, mbret i Flandrës:
Riza, Skënder:
Radovani, Gjorgj:

Ristiq, Jovan:
Ribentrop, diplomat:
Rudi, Hysen:
Rankoviq, Alexiosandër:
Ramadani, Hisen:

S

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Sofokliu:
Simoni, frigas:
Skylak:
Sturzi:
Sirmas, mbret tribal:
Statira:
Skribon, Gai:
Skylasi, filozof:
Skymo:
Sabijan, peshkop:
Stefani III:
Simeoni, mbret:
Sulejmani, sulltan:
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Strazimiri:
Spata, Gjin Bue:
Spatas, J:
Sulltan, Murati I:
Sulltan, Sulejmani:
Sulltan, Mehmedi II:
Sulltan, Mahmuti I:
Sulltan, Orhani:
Sulltan, Omani I:
Sulltan, Murati II:
Sulltan, Mustafai IV:
Sulltan, Mehmedi V:
Spata, Arnith:
Sadd-ed-Din:
Skurra, Mark:
Suma, M. Ipehkv:
Simbschen, von:
Skufas nga Arta:
Stefanos, Skuludhas:
Spahiu, Shuaip:
Sadullah, Bej:
Stadmüller, Georg:

Steeg:
Seferi, Idriz:
Skiroi, Gjon:
Szescen:
Solsbery, lord:
Sadiku, Ramiz:
Simkos, Antonio:
Stefani, Taurus:
Smajl:
Sopoti, Maz'har:
Sefa, Qazim:
Soba, Qazim:
Sermaxhaj, Efendi Haki:
Stalin J.V:
Sabato:
Siliqi, Risto:
Seferi, Kasem:
Stojadinoviq, Muilan:
Seseli, Burn:
Sanin, G:
Saliu, Nuri:
Surroi, Veton:
Solana, Havier:

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Shën, Pali:
Shën, Asti:
Shën, Jeronimi:
Shënb, Niketë (Niketë Dardani):
Shën, Ambrozi:
Shahbaraz, mbret pers:
Shahini, princ:
Shpata, princ:
Shufflay, Milan:
Shuvalov, princ rus:
Shabani, Haxhi:
Shiroe, Kavadh:
Sherifi, Mehmed:
Shubashiq:
Shkupi, Emin Bej:
Shpendi, Mehmed:
Shabani, Ramadan:
Shefqeti, Mehmed:
Shukriu, Ali:

Sheshel:

T

Tito, Josipo Broz:
Terminidi:
Turkididi:
Turker, mbret:
Toglavini:
Tubal:
Teuta, mbretëreshë:
Tiberi:
Teodosi I:
Teodosi II:
Trajan, perNDSHr:
Teuteriam:
Teodoriku, mbret:
Tolito:
Taciti:
Tomisllavi:
Teodori II, Laskari:
Timuri:
Torzelo, Giovanni:
Teodosi, perNDSHr:
Todhri, Daskal:
Tasuni, Osman:
Tomora, Cale:
Tetova, Mustafë:
Temo, Ibrahim:
Tahiri, Mehdi:
Topulli, Bajo:
Topulli, Çerqiz:
Teodorakis:
Tempo, Vukmanoviq Svetozar:
Tërpeza, Hysen:
Tërshana, Murat:
Trepshëv, D:
Tupurkovski, Vasil:

TH

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Thopia, Tanush:
Thoipia, Gjergj:
Thopia, Niketë:
Thaçi, Hashim:

U

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Uglesha:

V

Vokshi, Sabrije:

Vokshi, Beqir:

Vishi, Jetish:

Vllasi, Azem:

Veseli, Xhemail:

Vakiq, Ilia:

Vens, Sarius:

Veshoviq, gjeneral:

Voca, Shefqet Beqir:

Vuçaj, Pjetër:

Vllamasi, Sejfi:

Veqilharxhi, Naum:

Vlora, Syrja bej:

Vrioni, Aziz:

Vrioni, Iliaz:

Verlaci, Shefqet:

Vidi, princ:

W

Wigand, G:

Willain:

Wilhelm, II:

Willson Wudrov:

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Zija, Qenani:

Zylfiçari, Azem:

Zylfiçari, Ahmet:

Zeusi:

Zeno:

Zenebishti:

Zgzra, Sh:

Zaharija, Kajo:

Zografi, Dhimitër:

Zefi i Vogël:

Zajmi, Mehmed:

Zavalani, Fehmi:

Zeka, Haxhi:

Zigizmund

Zerqir, Zeqiri:

Zajmi, Tahir:

Zeçar, Miulan:

Zvezdiqi, Hasan:

X

Xylander:

XH

Xheladini, Haxhi:

Xhaferi, Myzafer:

Xhaferi, Arbër:

ZH