

Britain, the Albanian Question and the Demise of the Ottoman Empire  
1876-1914

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## Abstract

This thesis is based on a wide range of primary and secondary sources and explores British policy towards the development of the Albanian national movement and the parallel demise of the Ottoman Empire. It pursues three major objectives.

Firstly, it argues that during the period under discussion (1876-1914) Britain had only a limited involvement in the Albanian Question because of a lack of any major interest in Albania. This changed only during the various political crises and wars in the Balkans. In the context of such events, the British aimed to maintain the status quo in the region and secure their interests in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, mainly by preserving Ottoman rule. There was a significant difference between Liberal, Gladstonian views towards the Balkans and Albania, and Conservative views, which were mainly created by Disraeli. British Liberalism had a long-standing influence on the way the Ottomans and the Albanians were viewed and showed partiality towards Christians in the region. The Albanians did not fit neatly into this Liberal framework, namely due to their multi-religiosity and a certain liberal partiality towards Christians.

Secondly, this thesis argues that although Albanian nationalism was born in the early nineteenth century, it only grew significantly after 1878 as a result of the changes that were introduced by the San Stefano Treaty and the Congress of Berlin. Given the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, Albanian nationalist leaders believed that the Porte could not offer Albania sufficient protection against the territorial desires of neighbouring Balkan states like Greece, Montenegro and Serbia. Albanians therefore hoped to win British support and protection against the aggressive designs of their neighbours.

The third major objective is to analyse the role of the Albanian insurrections in 1908, 1909, 1911 and 1912, and other important events in the lead-up to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. This thesis argues that Albania achieved independence due to a number of interlinking factors: as a result of Albanian nationalism, as a consequence of the Balkan

Wars, as a result of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and lastly also as a consequence of British involvement, as shown during the conference of London in 1912 where an Albanian national state was finally created.

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## Britain, the Albanian Question and the Demise of the Ottoman Empire 1876-1914

*The Albanians passionately wanted a prince or Mpret [King]. The Great Powers promised to give them one. They wanted an Englishman because they believed that England, alone of the Great Powers, had no interests at stake in the Balkans.* - Margaret Fitzherbert.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In May 1913 the work of the London Conference of Ambassadors was still ongoing, but one important decision had already been taken: the independence of Albania. This decision gave rise to speculations about the choice of a sovereign for Albania and many European royal names were mentioned as potential candidates for the Albanian throne. At that time, a delegation of the Albanian Provisional Government had arrived in London, aiming to influence the decision-making process of the Conference and to win the support of the British public and government. Ismail Bey Qemali, also known as Ismail Kemal (1847-1919), the head of the Provisional Government and of the delegation, asked the British diplomat and politician Aubrey Herbert (1880-1923) how he would respond if the throne of Albania was to be offered to him. 'Of course, the Prime [Minister] and all the rest of them have been ragging about it for an age, but I don't know if I should have their support if it really comes along', wrote Herbert.<sup>2</sup> Herbert was, in many ways, the right man for the Albanian throne, but he could not accept the offer without the approval of the British government. He put this matter to the British Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey. An Englishman on the

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Fitzherbert, *The Man who was Greenmantle, A Biography of Aubrey Herbert* (Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Bejtullah Destani and Jason Tomes, eds., *Albania's Greatest Friend: Aubrey Herbert and the Making of Modern Albania: Diaries and Papers 1904-1923* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 93.

throne of Albania meant a duty and responsibility that the British government was not ready to accept.

The wish of the Albanian leaders to win the support of the British public and government will be a recurring theme throughout this thesis, which aims to examine the development of the Albanian Question and British policy towards it during the period 1876 to 1914. This study will illuminate the objectives of Britain's policy, while also assessing the reaction of the Albanians towards the position of British diplomacy. In broader terms, the British position towards the Ottoman Empire, within the context of relations with the other Great Powers, will also be explored. This thesis argues that the Albanian national movement grew as a reaction to other Balkan national movements, the Macedonian crisis of the 1890s and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. The very fact that the British had no interests at stake in the Balkans and were a democratic superpower was the reason Albanian leaders wanted British support and protection.

This lack of major interests was reflected in British public and academic circles, demonstrated by the fact that during the period under discussion, and even today, Albania remains a largely unknown country. Those who intend to research and study this field will face a relative absence of books or secondary sources. The number of scholars and experts who dealt with the Albanian Question of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was small, and their work remains almost unknown today in Britain. One such scholar was Edith Durham (1863–1944), a Balkan specialist and a rare expert on Albania's national movement, politics and ethnographic composition, whose work will be widely explored in this thesis. Recently there has been some renewed interest in Durham's life and work. Many of her letters and writings were published to offer help to those interested in this subject.<sup>3</sup> *Albania's Mountain Queen*,<sup>4</sup> a significant work by Marcus Tanner, is the only biography published so far about Edith Durham. This thesis therefore examines Durham's work to a deeper extent, exploring her support for the Albanian national question, her influence on the British government and the role she played among the members of the

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<sup>3</sup> See: Bejtullah Destani, *M. Edith Durham: Albania and the Albanians, Selected Articles and Letters, 1903-1944* (London: Centre for Albanian Studies, 2001) and Robert Elsie and Bejtullah Destani, *The Blaze in the Balkans, M. Edith Durham, Selected Writings 1903-1914* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Tanner, *Albania's Mountain Queen – Edith Durham and the Balkans* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

Balkan Committee, an organisation which was established and functioned on principles of Gladstonian Liberalism.

In most history books, including contemporary secondary sources which discuss the Balkans during this period, the Albanians are described as playing a minor role in broader historical events. Because of this, Albanians are always characterised as being late starters as far as national awareness is concerned, and the last to form their nation state. In reality, the study of the role of the Albanians in the history of Ottoman Europe proves that this matter has been widely overlooked and underestimated. James Tallon, in his research on the Albanian insurrections of 1909-1912, maintains that the Albanians have played a major role in the history of the Balkans and gave several reasons why the Albanians and their history received considerably less coverage than their Balkan neighbours. According to Tallon, the older works of (non-Albanian) Balkan authors have imposed their views on English-speaking scholars. These authors tended to minimise the role of the Albanians by introducing the Slavs and Greeks 'as principal actors in the general narrative of the Balkans'. Therefore, within this framework, the Albanians were presented as 'auxiliary actors'. An additional factor is that most scholars have no reading knowledge of either Albanian or the Ottoman-Turkish language. The third reason, which Tallon emphasises, is that the Albanians, the majority of whom are Muslim, did not fit well into any of the 'schemes frequently laid out in the general monographs on Balkan History.' Therefore, notions such as 'Turkish Yoke', 'Turcocratia' or 'Turkish Long Night' do not necessarily apply to the Muslim population of the Balkans, meaning the Albanians tended to fall into the category of the 'oppressor' and not the 'oppressed' a term reserved exclusively for the Christian population.<sup>5</sup>

Until 1998, when Noel Malcolm's book *Kosovo, A Short History*<sup>6</sup> was published, the only available solid scholarly work in English on the history of Albania was Stavro Skendi's book published in 1967.<sup>7</sup> However, in these two publications, British involvement in the Albanian Question has been studied only partially, superficially or in isolated fragments. Skendi's

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<sup>5</sup> James N. Tallon, 'The Failure of Ottomanism: The Albanian Rebellions of 1909–1912', *The University of Chicago, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing* (2012), pp. 1-16 (p. 4) <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1082026784>> [accessed 6 April 2017].

<sup>6</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967).

work covers the historical period of this thesis and explores the views of the Great Powers on the Albanian Question in general. His book also concentrates on the subject of the Albanian national and cultural revival, whilst the British position on the Albanian Question is only rather superficially addressed. Noel Malcolm's book is the other serious scholarly work on the topic. However, as the title suggests, it only covers the territory of Kosovo without emphasis on other parts of Albania and does not overly concern itself with British foreign policy. The intention of this thesis is therefore to deepen our understanding with new sources and with greater scrutiny.

After the fall of communism and the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation, Albania and Kosovo have attracted some attention among historians and scholars of other fields. As a result, several valuable works which study particular segments of Albanian history, have emerged. George Gawrych's book, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, is one such work.<sup>8</sup> Gawrych has recognised the existence of the Albanian ethnic identity in the early nineteenth century, which went on to develop into nationalism during the period between the activities of the Albanian League in 1878 and the insurrections of 1908–1912. By examining the efforts of Albanian nationalists, who aimed to gain nationality rights, and the efforts of conservatives to maintain local privileges under Ottoman rule, Gawrych has provided new and important perspectives on the development of Albanian nationalism. Emiddio Licursi maintains in his PhD thesis that the development of Albanian nationalism took place from 1878 to 1913, a period of time similar to that outlined by Gawrych and others. Licursi has described Albanian nationalism as 'multi-vocal' and presents it as different from other nationalist movements in the Balkans. In addition, he maintains that Albanian nationalism grew as a reaction to Turkish nationalism.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis will accept, to a degree, this established pattern and, in addition, will argue that the birth of Albanian nationalism is to be sought in the early nineteenth century and went on to develop with higher intensity between 1878-1912. Furthermore, it will be argued that the efforts of Albanian intellectuals to develop the Albanian language, and the question of

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<sup>8</sup> George Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874-1913* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Emiddio Pietro Licursi, 'Empire of Nations: The Consolidation of Albanian and Turkish National Identities in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1878–1913', *Department of History Columbia University*, (2011), pp. 1-138 (p.8) <[http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora\\_content/download/ac:131865/CONTENT/...](http://academiccommons.columbia.edu/download/fedora_content/download/ac:131865/CONTENT/...)> [accessed 20 January 2016].

Macedonia, became the driving forces behind the development of Albanian nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Albanian Question has also attracted limited attention in other recent publications, which primarily address the Macedonian or Balkan Question of the first decade of the twentieth century. In this regard, several authors have studied the Macedonian Question, the Young Turk movement and the revolution of 1908 from different points of view and have given a wide account of the events. However, all of them have overlooked the role of Albanian nationalists in the Young Turk movement and their conflict with Turkism. In Christopher Psilos' PhD thesis, the role of the Albanians in the revolution is recognised, but the Albanian Question in Macedonia does not receive proper attention.<sup>10</sup> In her PhD thesis Ahsene Gül Tokay has also shown a considerable interest in the role of Albanians in the Young Turk movement and revolution, but the Albanian Question and nationalism are missing, since she presents the Macedonian Question mainly as a Muslim–Christian problem.<sup>11</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, in his highly valuable studies on the Young Turks, has shown the importance of those Albanian nationalists who participated in the Young Turk movement and revolution.<sup>12</sup> However, none of these studies has focused on the Albanian Question in Macedonia and in all of these studies British involvement is almost entirely missing. Furthermore, none of these authors have looked into the reasons that led Albanian nationalists to give high levels of support to the Young Turk movement, nor why they were subsequently so disappointed with the revolution and involved in organising the counter-revolution which took place a few months later. The fallout between the Albanian nationalist leaders and the Young Turks will therefore be examined through the issue of language, which served as a subject of confrontation between Albanian nationalists and the Turkish nationalism that emerged from the ranks of the Young Turks. This confrontation, which ended with armed conflict, also heralded the end of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Albanian state. So far, these developments have not been recognised or

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<sup>10</sup> Christopher Psilos, 'The Young Turk Revolution and the Macedonian Question 1908-1912', *University of Leeds* (2000), pp. 1-253 (pp. 40-45) <[http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/4058/1/uk\\_bl\\_ethos\\_567897.pdf](http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/4058/1/uk_bl_ethos_567897.pdf)> [accessed 5 May 2015].

<sup>11</sup> Ahsene Gül Tokay, *The Macedonian Question and the Origins of the Young Turk Revolution, 1903-1908* (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1994) <<https://library.soas.ac.uk/Record/273276/Details>> [accessed 9 September 2015].

<sup>12</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu's explored works are: *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford University Press, 1995) and *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

examined, and chapters V and VI of this thesis therefore aim to assess these missing explanations and fill a gap in the existing literature.

This research aims to examine Britain's interest in the Albanian Question. In this regard, it questions how the image of Albania was created in Britain during the nineteenth century and how it had developed by the early twentieth century. Occasionally, the formation of Albania's image will be compared with that of Greece, Serbia and Montenegro. Chapter I of this thesis looks at two views which contributed to the image-building process, the foundations of which were laid by British travel writers and diplomats. The first view was established by travel writers, who described the Balkans and Albania without consideration for religion. This view was subsequently adopted by the Conservative party in Britain and its leader Benjamin Disraeli. The second view, which was also established by travel writers and diplomats, regarded religion as an important element in building the image of Albania. Among members of this group, William Gladstone played an important role in establishing the British Liberal view, which also became known as Gladstonian Liberalism. The first, non-religious Conservative view, favoured the Albanian national cause while the second, religiously-minded Liberal view, ignored the Albanians, the majority of whom were Muslim, and gave priority to the Christians in the Balkans. The priority given to the Christians was shown through publications which kept them in focus and suggested that their plea for freedom should be supported by the public and the government.

It was this religiously-minded Liberal view which led public opinion, politicians, and even academics, to believe that under Islamic Ottoman rule, the concept of state and religion were intertwined and to see the two as separate would be 'completely alien to Mohamedan mind.'<sup>13</sup> The contradiction between their religion and national demands seems to have spread further confusion among European, and particularly British, liberal politicians and public opinion, who were unable to see a distinction between Ottoman and Albanian identity. Overall, there was little knowledge about Albania in Britain and Europe.<sup>14</sup>

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13 Robert William Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans* (New York: Dutton, 1918), p. 21.

14 Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) had described Albania as a land within sight of Italy and less known than the interior of America; See: 'Albania Little Known Country', *Cambridge Sentinel*, 21. 4 (1925), p. 6 <<http://cambridge.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/cambridge?a=d&d=Sentinel19250124-01.2.48#>> [accessed 21 December 2016].

Ignoring the existence of an Albanian nationality and their political ambitions was simpler than reckoning with it.

Autonomy, as the main demand of the Albanian nationalist leaders, takes an important place in this study, as will be demonstrated by analysing the Conservative and Liberal approaches to the Albanian national cause. The question of Albanian autonomy will also be examined as a subject which is linked with Ottoman and British policy. In this regard, a considerable part of this study covers the Congress of Berlin (1878) and the Albanian political and military struggle which was led by the Albanian League from 1878 to 1881. This is explored in Chapter II, which aims to analyse the Albanian national question and British interest. Although the Albanians had proved capable of autonomous government with the activities of the League, their request for autonomy was denied. The Congress of Berlin had a great impact on Albanian nationalist leaders, who had marked the four *vilayets* (Ottoman administrative provinces) of Kosovo, Shkodra, Janina and Manastir as Albanian territories to be included in the future state of Albania. The importance of the Congress of Berlin can also be seen in its consequences which are felt to this day. The borders decided upon then still have the potential to create new conflicts or to rekindle old ones.

Moreover, this issue and its importance has, hitherto, not been studied in sufficient depth – an oversight that this thesis intends to address. The Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin showed little regard for the principle of nationality when deciding the new borders. Since then, because of this disregard, many wars have been fought. The Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and the First World War all came as a result of struggles for border changes. At the London Conference of Ambassadors (1912-13), the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the resulting Treaty of Versailles, the Powers continued with the attitude displayed at the Congress of Berlin and showed no respect for the principle of nationality when deciding the borders of the Balkan countries. As a result, more than half of the territories inhabited by Albanians were included in Greece and in the new state which became known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and later Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia, again, did not satisfy the principle of nationality, breaking up violently at the end of the twentieth century and ending with the Kosovo War in 1999.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Carole Rogel, *The Breakup of Yugoslavia and its Aftermath* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), pp. 69-71.



The debate between the Liberals and Conservatives, as the two parties in the British Parliament, and the press about the Albanian Question continued during and after the Congress of Berlin. Although originally markedly different in their approach, eventually there was little difference between the two parties regarding the main objectives of British foreign policy. Even Gladstone had accepted that maintaining the Ottoman Empire meant protecting the route to India.<sup>16</sup> Both political parties had also declared that the Balkans stood outside vital British interests. However, since Disraeli and the Conservatives had recognised the existence of the Albanian nationality, there was hope for Albanian leaders to find support for their national cause in the future.

The chances for Albanian leaders to win British support grew slim with the development of Gladstonian Liberal policy. After the Macedonian crisis of 1903, British public opinion and Liberal organisations, such as the Balkan Committee, pressured the government for closer engagement in the Balkans. In order to explain these early twentieth century developments in the Balkans and Albania, this study puts forward several questions: Why and how did the Macedonian Question contribute to the development of Albanian nationalism? The answer, inevitably, leads to new questions as to why Albanian nationalists, who aimed to create their own state, were engaged in the Young Turk Movement and the revolution.

However, the main question posed in this research is whether British policy and the Albanian nationalist movement had a common interest. Thus far, it has generally been accepted that the British government, due to a lack of major interests in the Balkans, had no separate policy regarding the Albanian Question and viewed this matter within the broader framework of the Eastern Question. Albanian leaders saw their national interests as best guaranteed by the continuation of Ottoman rule. But, in moments of crises in Albanian-Ottoman relations and when the Ottoman Empire was nearing the end, the Albanian leaders turned to the British for support. The intention of this thesis is therefore to offer a new interpretation of British policy by arguing that there were periods when the British government showed an interest in the Albanian Question. The Albanian Question came under the consideration of the British government during the international crises that took place in the Ottoman part of the Balkans. Such crises were addressed during the

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<sup>16</sup> William Norton Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After, a Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement 1878-1880* (London: Franc Cass, 1963), p. 7.

period of the Congress of Berlin, during the Macedonian crisis (1903-1908), and the Conference of London that was the result of the Balkan Wars (1912-13).

It was as a result of these Balkan Wars, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and as an interest of British policy that the Albanian state was born. The final part of this thesis (chapters VII and VIII) focuses on how British Liberal policy impacted the creation of the independent Albanian state. How did Gladstonian Liberal ideas manifest themselves in British public opinion, why did it show support only for the Balkan Christians and did this policy have an effect on the British government when the Albanian state was created? It is for these reasons that Edith Durham, Aubrey Herbert and a group of intellectuals, who formed the Albanian Committee in 1912, became engaged in refuting such public opinion and policy which, according to them, was not in favour of applying the principle of nationality in the case of Albania.

The approach of this study will be chronological, analytical, empirical and narrative. The main areas of research have been primary and published archival sources. The archival sources include those of the British Foreign Office, other government departments, consular and diplomatic reports, personal or private correspondence housed in the National Archives in Kew, London, as well in the House of Commons and the House of Lords (Hansard).

Other diplomatic and consular reports are explored from *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi* (The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office) in Istanbul, *Arkivi i Shtetit Shqiptar* (the Albanian State Archive) in Tirana and *Arkivi i Kosovës* (Kosovo Archive) in Prishtina. Most of these archival sources are used to explain important Albanian events, as well as the role and position that the Sublime Porte, other powers and Balkan countries maintained in the Albanian Question.

The collection of Aubrey Herbert's papers located in the Somerset Archives (Heritage Centre, Taunton) which thus far have rarely been used, are also explored for research on this topic. This includes a large number of documents used in this study to explain the activities of Herbert, who formed the Albanian Committee in 1912, with the aim of influencing public opinion and British policy in favour of the Albanian Question (chapter VIII). Although Herbert was a prominent British diplomat and Member of Parliament, he

remains almost unknown in British and Albanian history. Herbert was particularly important given that the Albanian leaders considered him fit for the Albanian throne. The documents (personal correspondence, speeches and newspaper articles) of the Somerset Archives and Herbert's published works are used in this study to explain this missing element which is important for both British and Albanian history.

Of particular help to Chapter VII of this thesis was the Edward Boyle Collection of correspondence and papers which were deposited in 1976 at Leeds University Library (Brotherton Library - Special Collections).<sup>17</sup> This research exploits for the first-time valuable correspondence between Edward Boyle and Edith Durham and papers relating to the Balkan Committee, which are part of this collection. This correspondence reveals aspects of Durham's role and her contribution to the Albanian national cause, British involvement in Albania, as well as some activities of the Balkan Committee which, until now, were unknown. This correspondence shows the important impact that Liberal views had in British politics, diplomacy and intellectual Liberal circles. Other documents that have rarely used before are those of the Surrey History Centre Archives and the Archives of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London, which are also utilised in this study.

The British diplomatic and consular reports have been most useful sources for this research. These reports are used here to describe situations even if there was no direct British link with or interest in Albania. The British diplomatic or consular representations in the field have covered almost every important event regarding Albanian matters in Albania, Constantinople and neighbouring countries. A considerable number of documents for the first time shed light on the developments of Albanian nationalism and other important events.

Of course, this study also draws upon secondary literature in the form of books, memoirs, pamphlets, and newspapers articles. The exploration of primary as well as secondary sources that are used in this study has required a knowledge of English, Albanian, Serbo-Croat, Macedonian and French languages. Some of the documents in Turkish and Ottoman language (Lisân-ı Osmânî) have been translated with the help of friends.

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<sup>17</sup> Sir Edward Boyle was Chairman of the Balkan Committee and the father of Lord Boyle - the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds from 1969 to 1981.

## Chapter I

### Creating the image of Albania

*I like the Albanians much; they are not all Turks; some tribes are Christians. But their religion makes little difference in their manner or conduct.* - Lord Byron.<sup>18</sup>

#### Introduction

No travel writer has described the Albanians better, nor indeed liked them more, than Lord Byron. In describing the Albanians, Byron has pointed out that to him as to the Albanians religion was not important. Yet, as we shall see below, religion did matter to other people in Britain and was a factor which played a fundamental role in forming an image of Albania in British politics and public perception.

This chapter presents the way in which the image of Albania was created in Britain, the impact it had on the British public and government, and the role this played in the lack of major British interest in the Albanian Question. This process, which took place during the nineteenth century, will be presented by analysing the religious and non-religious views that were adopted by travel writers and diplomats. The non-religious view was manifested by a group of travel writers who used Gothic aspects of English literature from the period, including novels and travel writings, to describe people and places. This non-religious perspective will be shown through the works of travel writers such as Lord Byron, John Hobhouse, Benjamin Disraeli (also known as Lord Beaconsfield), David Urquhart and others who visited Albania. This non-religious view was later upheld by Disraeli's Conservatives in their policy towards the Albanian Question, showing little regard for religion and supporting the preservation of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>18</sup> Leslie A. Marchand, ed., *Lord Byron: Selected Letters and Journals* (Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 33.

However, their intention to build a positive image of Albania was quickly overshadowed by those travel writers who viewed the region through the prism of religion, such as William Gladstone, Thomas Smart Hughes, Thomas Maitlan and others. This view was prejudiced against Albania on religious grounds, where the majority of the population were Muslim. These religiously-influenced views of Albania fitted Gladstone's doctrine of British Liberalism and contributed to their support of the Balkan Christians. This difference in opinions and priority given to religion caused these two politicians and their supporters to differ in their foreign policies and clash over this matter.

Although travel writings were not always considered historical sources, they were in fact powerful and significant in transmitting perceptions of other countries in Britain and elsewhere where English was used as a first or second language. This dispersal of information functioned in a triangle: between travellers' discourse, public opinion and foreign policy and its impact must therefore be analysed. The situation was complex due to the plurality of sympathies in Britain for different Balkan countries; in many groups or classes of British society there was at turns either sympathy or antipathy for the Ottomans, Greeks, Serbs, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Orthodox Christians or Muslims.

In the case of Greece, travellers who found that their imagined 'classical expectations' did not meet with reality became disappointed and depicted modern Greeks negatively. Other Balkan nations were depicted in the same way, mainly by travellers who were sympathetic towards the Ottoman Empire. Albania, as it will be argued below, was seen differently and Albanians were generally spared from negative depictions. In specific cases Albania was even glorified. In connection with this, it will also be argued that travel writers, generally, transmitted a picture of Albania which was based on perceptions or assumptions. Yet despite the relative increase in depictions of Albania by travel writers, this did not make a large impact in Britain during the nineteenth century and British foreign policy and the British public remained largely uninterested in Albania.

Yet British travellers did not only contribute to the process of image building of Albania in Britain. Their works became a valuable effort in building and enriching the historiographical, anthropological, linguistic, political and geographic understanding of Albania. In particular, geographic and historic parts of travel publications were greatly

explored by Albanian nationalists and ideologists, as were the issues of their origin, language, religion and manners.

In *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova dealt with the paradoxes, perceptions and assumptions that created the region's negative image in Western Europe. She emphasised the role that religion has played in creating prejudices about the Balkans. With her work on 'balkanism' she has become the main point of reference for those who study this field. The works of other contributors, such as Christopher Montague Woodhouse, Alex Hammond, Milica Bakić-Hayden, Elli Skopetea and Vesna Goldsworthy, show that Albania, compared with other Balkan countries, still remains a place that receives less attention. Eugene Michael has given more space to Albania in *The British and the Balkans*. As the title suggests, this is the only book published, so far, that deals more directly and more closely with the object of this thesis, although it covers only the period 1900–1950. Hence, there is a need for more light to be shed on the case of Albania. The forming of images of Albania and the creation of influences on British politics and public perceptions has not yet been considered as a separate subject of study in either Britain or Albania. The aim of the first part of this chapter is to fulfil this need.

## The Balkans

Before we try to understand nineteenth century Albania and how its image was built, it will be necessary to ask the same question about the Balkans more broadly. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines the Balkans as a region comprising the countries of former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia), Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and portions of Greece and Turkey. Yet, there is general agreement and acceptance that 'Balkan' is a word and name that entered into use with the arrival of the Ottomans in this part of Europe. However, the term Balkan did not find immediate use in Europe. Until the Congress of Berlin (1878), the official name used by the British and other European governments was 'European Turkey' or 'Turkey in Europe'. The official name used by the Ottomans was 'Rumeli,' meaning 'the land of the Romans'

but also meaning the area of ancient Greece. The Ottomans also used the term 'Avrupa Osmanli' (Ottoman Europe).<sup>19</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the name Balkan became a synonym for a different Europe or Near East and as such became an object of discussion in history and politics. The Balkans have produced an opposition or division between East and West in Europe. For Todorova this division is 'as old as written history,' and the Balkans must be treated as having a specific history and concrete geography.<sup>20</sup>

This division between East and West started with the ancient Greeks, who divided the world between the civilised (including themselves in this category) and the barbarians. Barbarians were the northerners while in the East, the Persians, were semi-civilised people. The Roman Empire, during the rule of Diocletian (244-312 AD), introduced an administrative division between East and West which was later taken as a division between Catholicism and Orthodoxy or Christianity and Islam. Albania is an example of where all these divisions converged. In all cases, divisions were based on religious, cultural and political factors. Yet only after the fall of Constantinople into Ottoman hands in 1453 and the growth of economic prosperity in the West was the East seen as inferior.<sup>21</sup>

The division of Europe between East and West, as we know it today, is largely an invention of eighteenth century Western European writers who produced a philosophy 'responsible for the conceptual reorientation of Europe along an East-West axis.'<sup>22</sup> From the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire entered into further decline while the rest of Europe prospered economically as a result of the Industrial Revolution and social changes introduced by the Enlightenment. Since then, the East, including the Balkans and Albania, lagged behind economically and culturally, and was associated with backwardness, underdevelopment of social relations and an absence of democratic institutions. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Balkans became a label or cliché which presupposed the existence of geographical and non-geographical references. In political debates, journalistic essays and in other conversations, the name Balkans was used to show the existence of a

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<sup>19</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (London: Constable, 1922), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> Todorova, p. 11.

region which has a specific identity and certain common features which fitted the accepted clichés.<sup>23</sup>

These clichés seem to have had an effect on the Balkan languages themselves regarding the use of the name Balkan. Excluding the Albanian language, the name Balkan has a derogative meaning in all other Balkan languages and stands for uncultured, uncivilised, backward and disorderly people. The most important word or notion that derives from Balkan is 'balkanisation'. This word had entered into use by the end of the nineteenth century in order to create political connotations and was used to name the 'process of nationalist fragmentation of former geographic and political units into new and problematically viable small states.'<sup>24</sup>

Even today labels and clichés stand behind the hegemonic usage of 'balkanism'. For Slavoj Žižek, a well-known Slovenian philosopher, the Balkans are still viewed with prejudice by the West. The West's mistrust, contempt and animosity towards the Balkans and its people is viewed by Žižek as a racist projection:

Much of this projection is racist. First, there is the old-fashioned, unabashed rejection of the Balkan Other (despotic, barbarian, Orthodox, Muslim, corrupt, Oriental) in favour of true values (Western, civilised, democratic, Christian).<sup>25</sup>

'Balkanism', as defined by Todorova, was shaped over the course of two centuries and took a specific form around the Balkan Wars and First World War. Yet 'balkanism' also evolved as a result of disappointment among those Western Europeans who hoped to fulfil their 'classical expectations' in the Balkans. These travellers, most of them British, were among the first to express their disappointment, particularly in the case of Greece. John Morritt was surprised to discover that modern Greeks had lost the physical and cultural traits they possessed in antiquity.<sup>26</sup> Reverend Thomas Smart Hughes (1786–1847), a scholar, historian and travel writer, probably expected to find Greece inhabited exclusively by ancient Greeks,

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<sup>23</sup> Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić, eds., *Balkan as Metaphor – Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005), p. 165.

<sup>24</sup> Todorova, p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'You May!', *London Review of Books*, 21, 6 (1999), pp. 3-6 (p. 3) <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v21/n06/slavoj-zizek/you-may>> [accessed 25 March 2015].

<sup>26</sup> John Morritt of Rokeby, *A Grande Tour: Letters and Journeys 1794-96* (London: David & Charles, 1985), p. 245.



and was thus surprised to find a vast number of Albanians living deep into the territories of Greece, as far as Attica, and including Athens.<sup>27</sup>

The love of the British for Greece during the first decade of the nineteenth century created huge disappointment when Greece turned out to be different from the images they had composed in their minds.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, Albania was not a disappointment because the travellers had no prior expectations of the country and its people. Albania, was generally unknown to most of them and, therefore, in most cases, appeared as a pleasant surprise.

Yet much more than classical expectations, the question of religion had a great impact on the British public and politicians and was also fed by some of the travellers' works. The process of independence of the Balkan countries, excluding the case of Albania, was seen not only as a liberation from Ottoman rule, but as a religious mission, too. On this Todorova, wrote:

The Balkan's predominant Christian character, moreover, fed for a long time the crusading potential of Christianity against Islam. Despite many attempts to depict its (Orthodox) Christianity as simply a subspecies of oriental despotism and thus as inherently non-European or non-Western, still the boundary between Islam and Christianity in general continued to be perceived as the principal one.<sup>29</sup>

Todorova, as well as Žižek and many others, have pointed out that although religion was not only the boundary between the West and the Balkans, it was often the main base upon which the West has constructed perceptions and prejudices about the East, the Balkans in general and Albania specifically. Direct links, which usually came from state interests between Britain and the Balkans as a region, or with individual states, were also important. Such a link, was missing between Britain and Albania during the nineteenth century, but this absence of direct interests did not stop the process of image building.

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Smart Hughes, *Travels in Sicily, Greece and Albania* (London: J. Mawman, 1820), p. 305.

<sup>28</sup> Tatiani G. Rapatzikou, ed., *Anglo-American Perceptions of Hellenism* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), p. 273.

<sup>29</sup> Todorova, p. 20.

### The murky picture of unknown Albania

The effect of constructed images has proved powerful. Karl May (1842-1912), the famous creator of the literary characters Old Shatterhand and Winnetou, also became popular for his novels on the Near East. Although he never set foot in the Balkans, his novels were well researched, being based on travellers' books, historic and geographic works. During the late 1970s, a German linguist visited Kosovo and Albania, admitting that these places were not so-different from the images he had created in his childhood, probably by reading Karl May's *Durch das Land der Skypetaren*.<sup>30</sup>

Another example which illustrates the capacity of images to heighten expectations and stretch the limits of reality is that of Flora Sandes, an English woman who served as a sergeant in the Serbian army during the First World War. When her unit retreated through Albania to Corfu, she met Albanian villagers for the first time. As impoverished Albanians of destroyed villages from the Balkan Wars and First World War, they did not look the way she had imagined them. She probably expected to see them as they had been presented by Lord Byron, a 'very picturesque race of men wearing spotless native costumes, and slung about with fascinating-looking daggers and curious weapons of all kinds.' The majority of the Albanians, as described by Sandes, were 'a perfect picture of squalor and filth' and a 'very degenerate looking race'.<sup>31</sup>

In Britain images and perceptions of the Balkan people were created through a long and gradual process. According to Andrew Hammond, this process of 'imagology' lasted a century and a half and was created to explain 'mutations that have marked British balkanism'.<sup>32</sup> The spread of information which contributed to creating an image of Albania in the British public sphere should be divided into two phases. The first phase took place throughout the nineteenth century. The second phase began in the twentieth century and brought a wider awareness of Balkan and Albanian affairs with a requirement for a closer

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>31</sup> Flora Sandes, *An English Women-Sergeant in the Serbian Army* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), pp. 120-121.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Hammond, *British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts* (London: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 9-11.

engagement.<sup>33</sup> The second phase is the subject of the third chapter, to which we shall return later.

During the first phase, the dispersal of information took place mainly through publications by diplomats and travel writers, who used religious and non-religious criteria to describe Albania as a geographic location and Albanians as a people, ethnic entity or nation. While the works of these travel writers could be considered independent in that they presented their own views, the independence of some publications should be questioned after 1830. This is especially true during and after the period of the Congress of Berlin (1878), when Britain, because of the emergence of Russia as a major power, adopted a policy of preserving the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, some authors opted to follow this policy line in their works.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century Albania remained largely unknown to ordinary members of the British public. In this respect Albania was ‘the Balkans within the Balkans’ and continued to be less known during the Cold War when it became a ‘curtain-within-a-curtain’.<sup>34</sup> This lack of interest among the public was reflected in government policy, which had no direct or major interests in the Balkans. Britain had controlled the island of Vis, which today belongs to Croatia, between 1811 and 1814 but at this time the eastern Adriatic coast was still called Illyria by the British.<sup>35</sup>

The British also held Parga, a town which is now in Greece. Further north of Parga, just off the Albanian coast, the British also ruled the island of Corfu, from 1815 to 1864. These were the only three cases that the British had direct interests in the Balkans. Although this period was short, as we shall see later Parga and Corfu, played an important role in building the religious view in Britain which reflected negatively on Albania’s image. However, other powers such as the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, Italy and France, occupied bigger portions of the region and ruled them for longer. The British government’s lack of interest

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<sup>33</sup> Eugene Michail, *The British and the Balkans – Forming Images of Foreign Lands 1900-1950* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), pp. 6-11.

<sup>34</sup> Hammond, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania – the Imperialism of the Imagination* (London: Hurst, 2013), p. 1.

in the Balkans was noticeable in media coverage of the region, which was never as serious as that of these other European Powers.<sup>36</sup>

As indicated earlier, the desire to see classical Greece initially attracted British travellers to visit the region. The region had not yet acquired the name the Balkans but became known in Britain, especially in intellectual circles and among politicians, because of developments which led to the formation of the powerful state of Ali Pasha Tepelena (1740-1822), the Napoleonic Wars and the independence of Greece. It was because of these developments that the British government opened its first consular representation in Arta in 1769.<sup>37</sup> By 1803 the representation became permanent when John Philip Morrier was appointed 'General Council in the Morea and Albania' with the centre in Janina, which was the court of Ali Pasha.<sup>38</sup> This is probably the earliest official recognition of the name Albania by the British government.

France, Italy and Austria-Hungary also established their consular offices in Janina and this opened the way for diplomats to become pioneers of travel writing on Albania. French historian and diplomat François Charles Pouqueville (1770-1838) was the initiator of this trend at the very beginning of the nineteenth century. British writer, topographer and diplomat William Martin Leake (1777-1860) was sent to 'European Turkey' in 1804 to help defend this territory against French attacks and a few years later was appointed as a British consular representative in Janina. Another diplomat that had significant influence on future travel writers was the Austro-Hungarian consul and scholar, Johan Georg von Hahn, who travelled in Albania and gathered information on history, philology and folklore and published *Albanesische Studien* (Albanian Studies) in 1853.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Michail, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> List of British Consular Officials in the Ottoman Empire and its former territories, from the sixteenth century to about 1860, p. 21 <[http://levantineheritage.com/pdf/List\\_of\\_British\\_Consular\\_Officials\\_Turkey%281581-1860%29-D\\_Wilson.pdf](http://levantineheritage.com/pdf/List_of_British_Consular_Officials_Turkey%281581-1860%29-D_Wilson.pdf)> [accessed 28 March 2015].

<sup>38</sup> His Majesty's Appointment of J. P. Morrier, Balliol College Archives & Manuscripts <<http://archives.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Modern%20Papers/Morier%20family/morierfam-biog.asp>> [accessed 28 March 2015].

<sup>39</sup> Robert Elsie, *Albanian History 1800-1899* <<http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts1800-1899.html>> [accessed 15 January 2014] - Pouqueville published in Paris in 1805 his three-volume edition: "*Voyage en Morée, à Constantinople, en Albanie et dans plusieurs autres parties de l'Empire ottoman pendant les années 1798, 1799, 1800 et 1801*" (Travels in the Morea, to Constantinople, Albania and several other parts of the Ottoman Empire in the years 1798, 1799, 1800 and 1801). The book became successful and within a short period of time was translated into English, German, and Italian. The book also attracted the attention of the French government which appointed Pouqueville as Consul General to the court of Ali Pasha in Janina; Johan Georg von Hahn also wrote: "*Griechische und Albanesische Märchen*" (Greek and Albanian Folk Tales) in 1864 and several other books; Leake surveyed the coast of Albania and Morea and published a four-volume work "Travels in Northern Greece," in 1835.

To a great degree, it was Leake who initiated the process of constructing an images of Albania in Britain and who influenced other British travel writers to continue the process. His work was published in four volumes and included travel studies which he undertook in Albania, Macedonia and Greece from 1804 to 1807.<sup>40</sup> The situation changed considerably in 1809 when Lord Byron (1788-1824) and John Cameron Hobhouse (1786-1869), later known as Lord Broughton, went to Albania.<sup>41</sup> The aim of their travel to Albania was to meet Ali Pasha and see the country which was thus far largely unknown in Britain. In 1813 Hobhouse published his book describing the places that he and Byron had visited and the meetings they had with Ali Pasha. Although Hobhouse's visit was made four years after Leake's arrival in Albania, his book was the first major publication on this matter.<sup>42</sup> Leake's, Byron's and Hobhouse's publications established the non-religious view of Albania.

#### The Travellers' Albania

The traveller's geographic descriptions and ethnic distribution of Albania should be taken as valuable first hand observations. However, every traveller had their own description, differing from the others. The description of people and individuals, although made from a non-religious point of view, should be treated with caution, as it was the personal relation of the travellers with the Ottoman Empire which framed the lens through which they looked at the Albanians. For those travellers who adopted the non-religious view, Albania was a beautiful country and the Albanians were magnificent people. Travellers who supported the Ottomans, praised the Albanians because they saw them as protectors of the empire. Those who disliked the Ottomans found reasons to like Albanians because there were many occasions when they defied the Porte. In this respect, as David Urquhart (1805-1877) observed, there was no straight or distinct line of separation between the Sultan's 'Skipetar [Albanian] friends and foes'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> William Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London: J. Rodwell, 1835), see: Chapters 1, 2, 7 & 8.

<sup>41</sup> Hobhouse became a Member of Parliament and served as Secretary for War under Earl Grey in 1832 and held positions in later governments.

<sup>42</sup> See: John Cam Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania, and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, During the Years 1809 and 1810* (London: James Cawthorn, 1813).

<sup>43</sup> David Urquhart, *The Spirit of the East* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), p. 178.

Before the arrival of British travel writers, Albania existed as the name of a territory in the Balkans but with no clear shape, form or figure. With the travellers' contribution, an image of Albania, in the form of a murky picture, or puzzle was created. It is not easy to say which one of the travellers contributed most to 'creating' Albania, but Lord Byron remains the best known in both Britain and Albania. He considered Albania as almost his own discovery and in a letter he sent to his friend Henry Drury, he touched on this matter by comparing the 'known' Greece with the 'unknown' Albania:

Greece, ancient and modern, you know too well to require description. Albania, indeed, I have seen more of than any Englishman (except a Mr. Leake) for it is a country rarely visited, from the savage character of the natives, though abounding in more natural beauties than the classical regions of Greece, which however, are still eminently beautiful, particularly Delphi and Cope Colona in Attica. Yet these are nothing to parts of Illyria and Epirus, where places without names, and rivers not laid down in maps.<sup>44</sup>

Because of the great effect that Ali Pasha's personality had on travellers, territories ruled by him were initially taken as a base for describing the size of Albania in a geographic sense. Lord Byron wrote that in geographical terms, Albania was a country that once used to be Illyricum but was now ruled by Ali Pasha.<sup>45</sup> Most of the travellers mention Illyria or Illyricum to emphasise the size of Albania, but also to give historic weight to their descriptions of the country which was inhabited by Albanians, who were characterised as descendants of the Illyrians. As they were 'discovering' Albania, Illyria was probably thought to be an attractive name for the British public and, as it turned out later, very appealing to Albanian national ideologists. As there was no clear geographical lay out, no precise distribution of population and no clear exercise of power, Albania appeared as an imagined country, as were all other Balkan countries before becoming nation states.

The absence of knowledge of the population's distribution was the reason Henry Holland (1788-1873) concluded that Albania could not be defined by any strict line or boundary. He could only give an outline of the Albanian territory on its coastal side. The country began in

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<sup>44</sup> Friz Greene Halleck, ed., *The Works of Lord Byron in Verse and Prose* (Hartford: Silas Andrus & son, 1840), p. 19.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Moore, *Life of Lord Byron, Vol. I. With his Letters and Journals, Letter 40 to Mrs. Byron* (London: John Murray, 1854), p. 110.

the north of the gulf of Arta, Greece, and continued northwards to end at the border of Montenegro, but he had no clear idea of how far to the east the border should be marked.<sup>46</sup> Due to the mixture of the population, none of the travellers was able to identify the eastern border, all pointing out that it should be somewhere in Macedonia. Holland suggested that language and other characteristics of the population should determine the outline in the east, and also used language to prove that the Albanians were direct descendants of the original population or remnants of the ancient Illyrians.<sup>47</sup>

Another geographic layout, again under the rule of Ali Pasha, was offered by Thomas Jolliffe (1780-1872) author and travel writer. For Jolliffe, Albania included the whole of Epirus, southern Illyricum, a considerable portion of Macedonia, the greater part of Thessaly, Acarnania, Phocis, Aetolia, and the division of Boetia.<sup>48</sup> In 1848 poet and painter Edward Lear (1812-1888) painted different parts of Albania and wrote an account of his journey which he called 'Travels to Illyricum Albania'.<sup>49</sup> Lear's Albania is divided in two parts but he gave no lay out. He went north to Shkodra (Scutari) and called it 'the capital of Illyricum',<sup>50</sup> while Janina was the capital of the south.<sup>51</sup>

The geographic layout, outlined by most of the travel writers, was close to the territories of the two *pashaliks* which had come into being by the end of the eighteenth century. By the beginning of nineteenth century the Sultan had decided to appoint Albanian *pashas* to administer their native territories, who ruled their *pashaliks* by employing local Albanians in the administration and military. Ali Pasha had used this opportunity to get away from the Sultan's rule and enlarged his *Pashalik* of Janina. At this time, when the travel writers visited the Balkans, the two *pashaliks* had emerged as two centres of powers in the Balkan territories which were inhabited by Albanians. Ali Pasha ruled in the south from Janina, and the Bushati family ruled in the north with Shkodra as their centre. Because the travellers mostly visited the south we do not have many descriptions of the north, but from other historic sources we know that the Bushati's influence was established by Mehmet Pasha

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<sup>46</sup> Henry Holland, *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia, etc. During the Years 1812-1813* (London: Longman, Hurst and Brown, 1815), p. 99.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Robert Jolliffe, *From Corfu to Smyrna Through Albania and the North of Greece* (London: Black, Young, and Young, 1827), p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Lear, *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Albania* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), p. 21.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p. 332.

between 1757 and 1775. He extended his area of control to the north-east, widened his political jurisdiction and refused to pay taxes to the Porte.<sup>52</sup> Territories were further enlarged by Mustafa Bushati when the war between the Porte and Russia started in 1828. Sultan Mahmud II needed Bushati's assistance in raising troops and more than half of Albania was put under his administration in return for his support. Bushati wanted more power and territory but after the war, the Sultan, fearing the disobedience of the Albanians may lead to independence, ordered Bushati to transfer the territories to the Grand Vizier and to accept a garrison of Ottoman soldiers in Shkodra. When he refused the order, the Porte sent troops against him. Both armies clashed in Macedonia, where Bushati lost three battles and was forced to withdraw to Shkodra. There he was besieged and in 1831 was forced to surrender.<sup>53</sup>

The Bushatis managed to mark the north-east (Kosovo and Macedonia) and central part as Albanian, a territory which Ali Pasha could not reach from the south. By the beginning of the nineteenth century both *pashaliks* roughly covered the territory of what is today Albania, northern Greece, western Macedonia, Kosovo and the south east of Montenegro. Both *pashaliks* were ruled by Albanian *pashas* and this created a sense of ethnic belonging for Albanians, which consequently led to a permanent conflict with the Porte.<sup>54</sup> This fact also created a need for Albanians to seek an autonomous relationship with the Porte and was most probably the reason that most anti-Ottoman travel writers viewed the Albanians with admiration. Just before the Congress of Berlin, the Porte divided this territory into four administrative units that became known as Albanian *vilayets*: Janina, Manastir, Kosovo and Shkodra. This did not mean that Albanians composed the majority of the population in all *vilayets*. The *Vilayet* of Kosovo included the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar and almost the entire territory of what is today known as south Serbia and parts of Macedonia. As Skendi noted, this administrative division came as a result of the Porte's effort to prevent the development of Albanian nationalism and the creation of homogenous Albanian *vilayets*. Although this division was made almost half a century after most of the travel books were

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<sup>52</sup> Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans - Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 84.

<sup>53</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>54</sup> Kristo Frashëri, *The History of Albania – A Brief Survey* (Tirana: Naim Frashëri, 1964), p. 102.



written, this new administrative form created a demarcation of an Albania which was a rather 'vague geographic expression'.<sup>55</sup>

The travel writers applied the criteria of religion, language, national dress and manners to characterise Albanians. Scottish traveller and diplomat James Henry Skene (1812-1866) used different principles to differentiate between the three groups of inhabitants in the Ottoman provinces in Europe. Greeks and 'Osmanlis' were the biggest groups differing in religion and origin. Albanians comprised the third group and differed from both of them in terms of their origin but were divided between two religions: Islam and Christianity. Skene also underlined that Albanians did not attract the attention of Europe as much as the other two groups and this was why they remained unknown in Europe.<sup>56</sup>

Because Albanians of the south were Muslim and Orthodox Christian, British politician John Hobhouse (1786-1869) took language and not religion as a criterion to distinguish them from the Greeks.<sup>57</sup> Byron, like his companion Hobhouse, divided Albanians religiously into Turks (Muslims) and Christians. He wrote to his mother to explain that the Albanians were not all Muslim, some were Christians, but religion did not matter to them.<sup>58</sup>

The fact that religion made no difference to the Albanians seemed to have impressed Byron deeply. As Woodhouse noted, to Byron 'religion was cant', not because he was unfamiliar with religious doctrines but precisely because he had studied them.<sup>59</sup> However, it was Byron who made a more effective introduction of Albanians to Britain and greatly influenced future travel writers. Byron fell in love with the country and there he was inspired to write his epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. In order to present a familiar picture in Britain, Byron compared the Albanians with the Highlanders of Scotland, whom they supposedly resembled in dress, figure and manner of living. To Byron, even the mountains of Albania seemed Caledonian but with a milder climate, their habits seemed similar and the Albanian language sounded to him like Celtic.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>56</sup> James Henry Skene, 'The Albanians', *Albanian History* <[http://www.albanianhistory.net/1848\\_Skene/index.html](http://www.albanianhistory.net/1848_Skene/index.html)> [accessed 3 April 2015].

<sup>57</sup> Hobhouse, pp. 9 & 94.

<sup>58</sup> George Gordon Byron, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life, Volume 1* (London: John Murray, 1830), p. 208.

<sup>59</sup> C. M. Woodhouse, *The Philhellenes* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), p. 46.

<sup>60</sup> Byron, p. 88.

Back in London in the summer of 1813, Byron put on the Albanian costume, which he had bought in Preveza, and stood in front of the portrait painter Thomas Phillips. The painting, which became very popular, was named “*Portrait of a Nobleman in the dress of an Albanian*” and was exhibited at the Royal Academy. The painting was also to prove to the British public that Byron identified himself with Albanians ‘whom he recognizes as fellow Europeans,’<sup>61</sup> and showed his attachment to Albania.

The painting has initiated considerable debate among intellectuals in Britain and elsewhere. In her recent studies, Katarina Gephardt has suggested that the portrait was commissioned by Byron only to promote his ‘self image as the author of *Childe Harrold’s Pilgrimage*’, and not to promote Albania.<sup>62</sup> Gephardt has argued that before visiting Albania, Byron held a ‘peripheral position in English society’, being a ‘landless aristocrat’ of Scottish descent and, as such, a ‘relative outsider’ in the British establishment.<sup>63</sup> Byron was fascinated with Albania and probably thought that the British public would also be fascinated by this unknown and exotic country. Therefore, it could be argued that Byron wanted to promote both himself and Albania.

When Byron’s first two cantos of the poem were published in London in March 1812, the expensive first printing sold out within three days. It caused a sensation among the public, which rather surprised Byron, who wrote in his memorandum book: ‘I awoke one morning and found myself famous.’<sup>64</sup> With Byron’s fame and the sensation surrounding his work, it appeared that Albania had made a magnificent entry in Britain, but this was not the case, as while his work made some impact in the literary world, the effect in the public and political spheres was not significant. Representations of Albania had also been made in 1806 with Pouqoville’s translation, and later in 1813 by Hobhouse and in 1815 by Holland were unable to match the spread of image and enthusiasm for Greece. At this stage Albania’s picture remained unknown and murky to the British public and it was Greece that won British sympathy and support.

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<sup>61</sup> Katarina Gephardt, *The Idea of Europe in British Travel Narratives, 1789-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 62-63.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>64</sup> Byron, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, pp.346-347; ‘Childe Harrold’s Pilgrimage’, BBC <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00xmx42>> [accessed 30 March 2015].

As a matter of fact, there is no evidence to suggest that Byron asked the British public or the government to support the Albanians or the Greeks. Yet, it cannot be denied that Byron contributed to spreading some love for Greece and Albania. He introduced Albanians as a free people living in their state under their leader, Ali Pasha, whom he considered as a 'man of first abilities who governs the whole of Albania'.<sup>65</sup> For Byron and most travel writers, Ali Pasha, the 'Albanian tyrant of Ioannina [Janina] was a paragon of learning' compared to the Greeks. Furthermore, in Byron's view, Albanians were 'less degenerate than both the ruling Turks and the oppressed Greeks.'<sup>66</sup> To some British Philhellenes, Albania was an additional reason which contributed to their disappointment with the Greeks they discovered to be 'ignorant'; the most excellent Greek schools and libraries were in Janina, which was ruled by Albanians.<sup>67</sup>

However, the notion of liberating the Greeks from the Ottoman Empire was becoming increasingly accepted by British intellectuals. Many thought that Russia should take over Greece and some, like Douglas Dakin, 'thought that the Albanians would do so.'<sup>68</sup> Byron and a dozen or so British travellers who had met Ali Pasha noted that he portrayed himself and the Albanians as friends of the British nation. They also noted that the Albanians, who were living independently, were not oppressed by the Porte and Ali Pasha was seeking to establish some kind of alliance with the British government.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, Albanians and Albania did not seem like they needed any help from the British, but, rather, it was the Greeks who were in greater need of British support.

As Byron's biographer Matthew Iley explained, Byron's travel writing power was immense. No one has described better national differences, costumes, manners and governments.<sup>70</sup> Byron, like no one else before, presented the Greeks as living under the 'Turkish yoke' but he never made a public call to help them. The call to help the Greeks in Britain was spread by other Philhellenes and travel writers. By 1823 the Philhellenes had created a feeling among the British public, or at least among intellectuals, that something had to be done in

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<sup>65</sup> Moore, p. 110.

<sup>66</sup> Gephardt, p. 89.

<sup>67</sup> Woodhouse, p. 36.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>69</sup> Hobhouse, p. 98.

<sup>70</sup> George Gordon Byron, *The Life, Writings, Opinions, and Times of the Right Hon George Gordon Noel Byron, Lord Byron*, Vol. 1 (London: Matthew Iley, 1825), p. 94.

support of the 'heroic Greeks' so they could be liberated from the 'centuries-old yoke of their Ottoman, un-Christian and cruel oppressors'.<sup>71</sup> The Philhellenes emphasised religion by emphasising that the 'cruel Ottoman oppressor' was 'un-Christian'.

On 8 March 1823 a group of Philhellenes formed the *London Greek Committee*, an organisation which would support the Greek national cause and reject Albanian nationalism. Byron did not attend the meeting and played no part in this initiative.<sup>72</sup> Edward Blaquiere, a Committee activist, set off in the spring of 1823 for Greece and stopped at Genoa, Italy, to ask Byron if he was interested in leading an armed expedition to Greece. Byron accepted the invitation and during the summer of 1823 made his second journey to Greece to join the war of independence.<sup>73</sup>

Even in Greece, Byron preferred to be among Albanians. In August 1823, on board the ship *Hercules*, Byron was waiting to join Albanian Suliote forces led by Marko Boçari (Marco Botzaris) who fought for independence of Greece. Boçari had sent a letter to Byron to thank him for his moral and financial support and to let him know that he would receive him as a noble ally on his landing. That very night, 21 August 1823, Boçari was killed in the attack he led against the Ottoman army.<sup>74</sup> A few months later, on 19 April 1824, Lord Byron died of fever in Missolonghi and became a hero in Greece and a legend in Albania. Ali Pasha had died two years earlier defending his castle in Janina in his last battle against the Ottomans. This was the end of Albania as some of the British travel writers knew it and as was glorified by Byron. From that moment on, Albanians came under the Porte's direct rule and found themselves in a similar position to that of the Greeks before independence.

#### From Gothicism to Gladstonian Liberalism

British travellers who disregarded religion, specifically Byron and Hobhouse, who were both supporters of democracy, promoters of liberal ideas and social reforms at home in Britain,

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<sup>71</sup> 'The London Greek Committee', *Cambridge Library Collection* <<https://cambridgelibrarycollection.wordpress.com/2014/08/21/the-london-greek-committee/>> [accessed 11 December 2016].

<sup>72</sup> '43. Letter to Byron from the London Greek Committee', *NLS Ms.43530* <<http://www.kingscollections.org/exhibitions/specialcollections/byron/greece/letter-from-london-greek-committee>> [accessed 10 December 2016].

<sup>73</sup> Edward Blaquiere, *Narrative of a Second Visit to Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge Library Collection, 2014), p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Moore, *Life, Letters, and Journals of Lord Byron* (London: John Murray, 1839), p. 596.

loved Albania and admired Ali Pasha. Some travellers saw the Pasha as a cruel tyrant but Byron, Hobhouse and some others did not look at him that way. Charles Cockerell (1788-1863) an architect, archaeologist and writer, who visited Albania in 1814 and met Ali Pasha, explained why the tyrant and his governance should be admired:

There is law — for everyone admits his impartiality as compared with that of rulers in other parts of Turkey — and there is commerce. He [Ali Pasha] has made roads, fortified the borders, put down brigandage, and raised Albania into a power of some importance in Europe.<sup>75</sup>

Ali Pasha was not only known for establishing law and order in his *pashalik*. During his rule and with his support the best Greek schools were established in Janina. There, Henry Holland found a ceiling with decorations which showed aspects of Copernican astronomy. Holland discussed European and American politics with Ali Pasha and wrote that Pasha had a considerable knowledge of science.<sup>76</sup> Above all, Pasha asked important and clever questions, such as why so many Englishmen were coming to Janina.<sup>77</sup> ‘The correct answer was to meet the great Pasha himself,’ wrote Woodhouse.<sup>78</sup>

Historical circumstances, as well as his own actions, had raised Ali Pasha to the position of negotiating on equal terms with Napoleon and other Western governments of his time. To diplomatic envoys and travellers, Pasha played the role of a believer in the democratic principles of the French Revolution, although his character and actions suggested otherwise.<sup>79</sup> Yet he certainly knew how to impress his British guests. Seeking to establish friendship or some kind of alliance with Britain, he received British diplomats, travellers and politicians with great honour. He once served dinner on golden plates in honour of the Earl of Guildford in his magnificent garden on the lake of Janina.<sup>80</sup>

Ali Pasha’s friendly behaviour towards his guests and his interest in science and world politics were not the only reasons most British travellers echoed Byron’s and Hobhouse’s approach, their admiration for the tyrant and their love for Albania and Albanians. In 1851,

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<sup>75</sup> Charles Cockerell, *Travels in Southern Europe and the Levant, 1810-1817*, (London: Longmans, 1903), pp. 244-245.

<sup>76</sup> Holland, pp. 133-140.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 201.

<sup>78</sup> Woodhouse, p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality*, p. 48.

<sup>80</sup> Hughes, p. 138.

Edward Lear used Byron's words to present Albania as 'savage, yet classic, picturesqueness, perfectly exquisite...' Even seven decades after Byron, in 1888, another travel writer H.A. Brown, described Albania as a country of 'diabolic mountains' where 'the wind howled like a wild beast.'<sup>81</sup>

Many travel writers applied Gothicism to their works, a literary form which had emerged by the end of the eighteenth century and which was used as a genre by British novelists and travel writers in search of images, symbols and motifs to 'depict the perceived monstrosity of a variety of post-colonial regions.'<sup>82</sup> The British Gothic literary tradition was known for portraying priests, monks and nuns as sinners.<sup>83</sup> As such, Gothicism was anti-religious and important to Byron's writing. Byron derived from it a template for his more mysterious, alienated characters, along with his preoccupation with ruins or architectural decay.<sup>84</sup> He found plenty of these elements in Albania. Byron and Hobhouse, like many after them, were delighted to meet Ali Pasha because his despotic character fitted well into this imagined Gothic environment. Apart from political tyranny, they also found plenty of situations to enjoy and beautiful places to admire. In Byron's descriptions, Albanians and their land also appear in romantic images, described as unknown, heroic, dangerous, enigmatic and beautiful. Albania, in his words, was 'a shore unknown which all admire, but many dread to view'. In *Childe Harold*, Byron pushed the existing boundaries of poetry and entered into new poetic territory, creating images which influenced the British perception of Albania and Albanians in literature.<sup>85</sup> However, these images, being glorified, often romanticised and containing Gothic elements, were a long way from reality. Yet despite all these hyperbolic and dramatic depictions of Albania, the point to emphasise here is that Byron and other writers who used Gothicism did not create prejudice against Albanians on a religious basis.

Albania, Montenegro and some other Balkan countries, were rare places left in Europe where Gothic travel writers found powerful stimulus for their imaginations. For Gothic writers, Albania and other Balkan countries, were the Europe of the past. In Albania they

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<sup>81</sup> Hammond, pp. 69-70.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Wendy Graham, *Gothic Elements and Religion in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fiction* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> Peter Cochran, ed., *The Gothic Byron* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Goldsworthy, p. 23.

saw a frozen picture of Europe. The Gothic style also appeared in travel writings about other Balkan countries like Romania where the British travel writer Florence Berger, according to local legend, discovered 'the genius of the Rumanian people'. Others discovered that Romania was the country of vampires with Dracula as their lord. Montenegro was full of warriors who 'roasted children and drunk enemy's blood'. Serbs barked 'like dogs baying at the moon' in a mournful cry, while in Bulgaria robbers appear out of nowhere as 'a mass of smoking, steaming horsemen' ready to kill at any moment.<sup>86</sup>

Nationalist movements in the Balkans were not seen with sympathy by most travel writers. The territorial reduction and gradual fall of the Ottoman Empire was seen as a threat to the British Empire whose trade and influence was endangered, and the fall of the Ottoman Empire was seen as evidence of how the British colonies could be lost.<sup>87</sup> This negative depiction was applied partly because the Gothic style required it be so, but mostly acted as a form of revenge against those Balkan nations who rose against the Ottoman Empire. Yet from 1800 to 1878, within which period most of these books were published, Albanians did not have an active nationalist movement and were therefore seen as protectors of the Ottoman Empire. Until 1878 they had risen against the empire many times, but not for the same reasons as their neighbours, and therefore Albanians were spared such negative depictions.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) visited Albania in 1830 when he was 26 years of age. In Disraeli's life, like in Byron's, religion did not play an important role. However, Disraeli's Albania was specific and differed from the way it was portrayed by Byron and other travellers. Although he was an ardent admirer of Byron, and it was because of him that he visited Albania, his sympathies were in favour of the Porte and therefore against the Albanians who, after the death of Ali Pasha, had risen against the Ottoman Empire. When Disraeli was still in Corfu, he wrote that his intentions were to join the Ottoman army against the Albanians and Greeks.<sup>88</sup> There was nothing strange in this decision, considering that he was a Conservative politician and in favour of preserving the Ottoman Empire. On his way to Albania he spent some time in Malta, where he was further influenced by British

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<sup>86</sup> Hammond, pp. 71-72.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> William Flawelle Money Penny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield*, (London: John Murray, 1910), p. 158.

army officers and merchants who wanted a peaceful Mediterranean coast. The army seemed to have been against the warlike Albanians and the merchants were against the Greek pirates who preyed upon British ships and merchandise.<sup>89</sup> However, Disraeli would soon change his mind about Albania.

Disraeli spent a few weeks in British-ruled Corfu, waiting until the Albanian insurrection was over. After the insurrection, the Ottoman Grand Vizier and supreme army commander, Mehmet Reshid Pasha, had invited 500 Albanian leaders to Manastir to reward them for the role they played against insurrection in some parts of Albanian and for the contribution in the war against Greek independence. On 26 August 1830 he massacred them all during the banquet he had organised for them. Afterwards Mehmet Reshid Pasha moved north to subdue the northern Albanian *pashalik* of Mehmet Pasha Bushati.<sup>90</sup>

This massacre and the submission of southern and northern parts of Albania was committed with the aim of preventing any future spread of the Albanian national resistance movement. The Porte believed that Albanian leaders were inspired by the Greek war of independence and other nationalist movements that were occurring in the Balkans. However, this could be considered as the first intervention of the Porte against an early 'Albanian nationalist movement.'<sup>91</sup>

The massacre had taken place only few weeks before Disraeli arrived in Albania. On his arrival the first thing he learned of was this massacre, on which he wrote:

I poured forth my indignation at this savage treachery. [...] The practice of politics in the East may be defined by one word, dissimulation.<sup>92</sup>

The massacre and destruction made Disraeli question his belief in Ottoman politics and see Albania through a different prism than that of the imagined ideas that Byron had created. Disraeli called the country Albania, with Janina as the capital, although when he visited it had fallen under the direct rule of Constantinople. Surprisingly, Albanians still impressed him even though they were subdued and their country was turned to ruins. In the town of

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<sup>89</sup> Donald Sultana, *Benjamin Disraeli in Spain, Malta and Albania 1830 – 32* (London: Tamesis Books, 1976), p. 43.

<sup>90</sup> Frashëri, *The history of Albania*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>91</sup> Sarah Inglis, 'Origins of the Albanian National Awakening', *Haemus Journal*, 2 (2013), pp. 77-87 (p. 80) <<http://haemus.mk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Haemus-Journal-Vol-2-2013-Inglish.pdf>> [accessed 20 October 2016].

<sup>92</sup> Benjamin Disraeli, *The Works of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, Volume II*. (New York and London: M. Walter Dunne, 1904), p. 18.



Arta, the only two buildings he saw standing and undamaged were the main mosque and the house of the British Consulate. He was touched by the situation and wrote about his feelings:

Here for the first time I reposed upon a divan, and for the first time heard the muezzin from the minaret, a ceremony which is highly affecting when performed, as it usually is, by a rich and powerful voice.<sup>93</sup>

The Albanians were heavily armed and to Disraeli looked dangerous and ready for the next rebellion. Their weapons, and the way they looked and acted, are incorporated into his historical romance *The Rise of Iskander*.<sup>94</sup> He praised Skanderbeg, the Albanian national hero, with glorifying and Gothic words similar to those that Lord Byron had used in *Childe Harold*.<sup>95</sup> Disraeli, like other Gothic writers, considered Ali Pasha a 'formidable ruler that had made Albania so independent.'<sup>96</sup> On his way to Janina he described ruined buildings and Pasha's rule:

We found ourselves at a vast but dilapidated khan as big as a Gothic castle, situated on a high range, and built as a sort of half-way house for travelers by Ali Pasha when his long, gracious, and unmolested reign had permitted him to turn this unrivalled country, which combines all the excellences of Southern Europe and Western Asia, to some of the purposes for which it is fitted.<sup>97</sup>

Almost 8 years after Ali Pasha's death, Disraeli, like Byron and other travel writers, admired the Pasha's efforts for 'specifying Albania and extending its boundaries'. Above all, Disraeli was impressed by Pasha because under Pasha's 'patronage Janina had become the literary capital of the Greek nation.'<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, Disraeli enjoyed his visit, saw ethnic differences between Albanians and Greeks and also recognised the will of the Albanians for self-rule.

However, Disraeli did not apply the Gothic style to all his writings on Albania. In this respect, Disraeli made way for the new era of travel writing, which would continue to be

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<sup>93</sup> Earl of Beaconsfield, *Home Letters* (London: John Murray, 1885), p. 78.

<sup>94</sup> See: Benjamin Disraeli, *The Rise of Iskander* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1833).

<sup>95</sup> Sultana, p. 54.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>97</sup> Beaconsfield, p. 79.

<sup>98</sup> Sultana, p. 54.

represented by David Urquhart, a writer, diplomat and politician, who was seeking to lay the foundation of a pro-oriental project in British foreign policy.<sup>99</sup> This pro-oriental policy would have also been a pro-Albanian policy.

Urquhart was known as the best example of 'thwarted philhellenism' that started after the independence of Greece.<sup>100</sup> He contributed enormously to the Greek cause by taking an active role in the war of independence, where he was wounded. After his disappointment with the Greeks he reversed the whole stereotype of philhellenism, and in his book *The Spirit of the East* went on to champion the case of the Ottoman Empire and praise the Albanians. With his pro-Ottoman and anti-Russian political views, Urquhart found a prominent place in Disraeli's political camp and served as an example of how to influence the press. For Urquhart, the Porte had built an amazing political system of checks and balances and he pointed out that this system had allowed, and even favoured, the local independence of different religions and nationalities. Here he saw the chance for nationalities, including Albanians, to prosper within the Empire.<sup>101</sup> Yet this prosperity would only be possible if the Porte was reformed with the help of the British government, and since this remained unlikely, he described Albania as a place which was suffering under the weight of an Ottoman Empire in the process of decay and collapse. Within this framework he saw the *Skipetars*, as he often called Albanians, and the Porte as open enemies and permanently engaged in armed conflict.<sup>102</sup> Although he was a supporter of the Ottoman Empire he did not exclude the possibility of Albania becoming autonomous. Urquhart looked at the Albanian question from the position of a politician and diplomat, and from this angle analysed the situation and gave his sympathy to Albania. He was also the first travel writer to bring north Albania into view as an important political and military factor, evoking important historic moments of the past and proposing political strategies in case the conflict between Albanians and the Porte escalated further.<sup>103</sup>

Urquhart, like many British travel writers, noticed that the Albanians were interested in winning British support. 'The Albanians seem most anxious to display, on all occasions, their

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<sup>99</sup> Geoffrey Nash, *From Empire to Orient - Travellers to the Middle East 1830-1926* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Katerina Zacharia, ed., *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 190-200.

<sup>101</sup> Urquhart, p. 51.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p. 181.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 182-3.

respect for England,' wrote Urquhart and added: 'our power and our motives are equally incomprehensible to them; and no wonder.'<sup>104</sup> It is for this reason that the Albanians would not send British travel writers and other visitors away 'with a bad opinion of Albania.'<sup>105</sup>

Urquhart should be considered the first British travel writer who voiced the need for Albanians to be supported by the British. He suggested that the British government should establish trade and cultural relations with this part of the Ottoman Empire and did not hide his admiration for Albanians.<sup>106</sup> Without doubt, Urquhart was the first British travel writer of the nineteenth century to write with the purpose of influencing the British government and public opinion on the Eastern Question, and by extension the Albanian Question.

With this contribution, Urquhart gave rise to a new group of British travel writers who sought to influence the public and persuade the government to form policies in favour of the countries they supported in the Balkans. Urquhart's example was followed by other travel writers, but their influence went against his ideas and efforts. Urquhart broke with the Gothic tradition of writing, but at the same time he did not apply the religious criterion to his depiction of Albania. His efforts in influencing the British public and government were soon overshadowed by William Gladstone's activities. In this respect, Urquhart should also be seen as the last British travel writer to have applied the non-religious view and the last to have tried to create a supportive climate for Albania in Britain. In other words, with Urquhart, the nineteenth century battle to win over the British public in favour of Albania, was over. The end of this phase paved the way for Gladstonian Liberalism, which was much more influenced by religious interpretations of the Albanian Question.

As we saw earlier, the British ruled the island of Corfu, yet after 48 years of rule the government gave the island to the Kingdom of Greece. For a short time, from November 1858 to February 1859, Gladstone had served as High Commissioner Extraordinary there and played an important role in giving the island to Greece.<sup>107</sup> A visit by the British delegation to Albania in November 1858 heralded significant changes in British politics and public opinion. The delegation arrived in Albania from Corfu to visit the town of Filates and, according to John Morley (1838-1923), a journalist, writer and later a Liberal politician, the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 163.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 229.

<sup>106</sup> See: Chapter XIII, XIV & XI in *The Spirit of the East*.

<sup>107</sup> Gladstone to Lytton, December 1858 - February 1859, NA, CO, 883/1/12.

Albanian population there had organised a magnificent reception for their British guests. The entire population had come out to welcome them. The host, Jaffier Pasha, served a dinner with 32 dishes, or '32 courses' as Morley called it, which impressed most of the guests.<sup>108</sup> Morley was accompanying the most important guest, William Gladstone, who was not impressed by the host and who did not enjoy the visit at all. During the dinner, Pasha's son told Gladstone that he should become a *pasha* in Albania. Gladstone was not impressed by this 'offer', either. To Gladstone, Albania, particularly the mosque and muezzin, did not create the same impression as they had for Disraeli. On this matter and the whole visit, which lasted only one day, Gladstone wrote in his diary:

Visited the mosque, heard the muezzin, & went through the town (Philiates). Turkish dinner in rude abundance. The whole impression is most saddening: it is all indolence, decay, stagnation: the image of God seems as if it were nowhere.<sup>109</sup>

This was the only time that Gladstone visited 'Godless' Albania or any other part of the Ottoman Empire, but the visit led him to 'fix a prejudicial image of the Ottoman realm in his mind'. This was also an important moment for Gladstone in developing his doctrine of British Liberalism.<sup>110</sup> Gladstone was already known for his idea that Europe, particularly the Concert of Europe, should be a community of Christian nations.<sup>111</sup> However, it was in Albania that Gladstone's preconceptions of Ottoman rule and Muslims were 'readily reinforced'. Gladstone also felt that leaving Corfu to the Greeks meant abrogating the Treaty of Paris of 1815 and above all meant that the island was left to the 'degradations of the Ottomans' which would 'deepen the ongoing Eastern Question.'<sup>112</sup>

Albania had another great effect on Gladstone's life. As a result of the visit, Gladstone studied Hahn's *Albanesische Studien* a 'work that seems to have swayed' him towards another study. Hahn's study focused on the fact that the modern Albanians of Epirus descended from the ancient Pelasgians and Gladstone had accepted this as fact. In August

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<sup>108</sup> John Morley, *The life of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol. 1:1809-1859* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 606.

<sup>109</sup> Henry C. G. Mathew, *Gladstone 1809-1898* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 167.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Holland and Diana Markides, *The British and the Hellenes: Struggle for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 32.

<sup>111</sup> David William Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Michigan: William B. Publishing Company, 1993), p. 115.

<sup>112</sup> Roland Quinault, *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 228.

1862 he selected the book for 'systematic summer reading.'<sup>113</sup> A few years later in 1869, Gladstone wrote *Juventus Mundi: The Gods and Men of Heroic Age*. Gladstone referred to Hahn's studies on many occasions throughout the book,<sup>114</sup> and was noted to have said that he 'learned a great deal from *Albanesische Studien* and highly valued Hahn's work'.<sup>115</sup> During 1862 Gladstone was also seen displaying Hahn's book predominantly as he travelled. In Penmaenmawr in Wales he 'quizzed the Bishop of Gloucester's wife about Albania'.<sup>116</sup> But, Gladstone was not interested in the origins of the Albanians, their geographic distribution, language, ethnic or national issues. His interest was in the religious side of Hahn's work, or more precisely, the question of how Pelasgian spirituality had contributed to Hellenic faith and Greek art. However, it was Albania and consequently *Albanesische Studien* which seem to have been the 'decisive factor in swinging Gladstone in favour of a naturalistic explanation of religion' in ancient Greece.<sup>117</sup>

At home Gladstone had developed religious liberalism, the idea that there should be equality and opportunity for all believers of the Church of England and those of other religious persuasions. He was also rare among politicians and intellectuals in showing no enthusiasm for the anti-slavery campaign.<sup>118</sup> However, for him, politics and religion went hand in hand and he maintained that his faith is the faith for all humankind. As Fawcett noted, Gladstone 'remained unshaken in that characteristically liberal mix of Enlightenment and Christian universalism'.<sup>119</sup> In international politics and regarding the Balkans, Gladstone maintained that Christians should be first liberated and then assisted through Enlightenment. Therefore, by the 1860s, it became obvious that Gladstone was applying religious interpretation to his views on the Ottoman Empire, Balkans and Albania. Furthermore, in applying this view, he did not see Albania as a distinct part of the Ottoman Empire as most other travel writers had. Albania seemed not to exist for Gladstone.

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<sup>113</sup> David Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 184-186.

<sup>114</sup> See Hahn and Albania or Albanian language in: William Ewart Gladstone, *Juventus Mundi: The Gods and Men of the Heroic Age* (London: Macmillan, 1869), pp. IV, 85, 91, 140, 146, 147, 264, 289, 303, 306, 216, 328, 336.

<sup>115</sup> Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone*, pp. 184-186.

<sup>116</sup> Keith Robbins, *Politicians, Diplomacy and War in Modern British History* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), p. 48.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Roland Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', *The Historical Journal*, 52. 2 (2009), pp. 363-383 (pp. 70-74) <[http://0-www.jstor.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/stable/40264175?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://0-www.jstor.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/stable/40264175?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)> [accessed 5 January 2017]; Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, Nick Draper, Kate Donington and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 107.

<sup>119</sup> Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 115.

However, Gladstone was not the first British personality or travel writer to see Albania through the prism of religion. This view was expressed decades earlier, almost in parallel with the non-religious view, and was linked with the town of Parga. In 1817 Ali Pasha bought Parga from the British government and this act did not go unnoticed by the public. Reverend Thomas Smart Hughes wrote on this occasion that every Englishman must 'feel the blush of shame tingle in his cheeks', and felt that delivering Parga to Ali Pasha was a 'cruel and impolitic' act. Furthermore, Reverend Hughes was 'distressed by the thought of a Christian power' giving up this important town 'to an infidel tyrant.'<sup>120</sup> The point which should be underlined here is that the rejection of Parga being transferred to a 'Muslim power' was made on religious grounds and Reverend Hughes had established a pattern of viewing Albania from a religious point of view. In April that year, a similar view was expressed by Thomas Maitland, who served as High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands, which were placed under British control by the Treaty of Paris in 1815.<sup>121</sup> On this matter, Maitland wrote to the Colonial Minister, Earl Bathurst:

here was no measure more detrimental to our character than this cession ... Whenever may have been the diplomatic justice or policy of cession of Parga, it is certain that the shock given by that lamentable transaction to every Christian in the East, lessened the influence of England far more seriously than could be compensated for by any gratitude on the part of the Turks.<sup>122</sup>

Parga was also discussed at great length in the British Parliament but it was Lord John Russell who brought up the religious aspect, accusing the British government of failing to preserve the Christian religion of the people of Parga.<sup>123</sup>

The religious remarks of Reverend Hughes, Maitland and Russell on the topic of Parga and Albania did not create any immediate effect on the British government or public. Yet four decades later, the religious idea was to gain more weight under the patronage of Gladstone. It is then that the religiously-informed idea, which contained considerable anti Albanian sentiment, was continued by two travel writers Georgina Muir Mackenzie (1833–

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<sup>120</sup> Jim Potts, *The Ionian Islands and Epirus: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 100.

<sup>121</sup> Quinault, *William Gladstone*, p. 221.

<sup>122</sup> Potts, p. 101.

<sup>123</sup> House of Commons Debate, 29 June 1820

<[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1820/jun/29/parga#S2V0002P0\\_18200629\\_HOC\\_10](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1820/jun/29/parga#S2V0002P0_18200629_HOC_10)> [accessed 3 January 2017].

1874) and Adeline Paulina Irby (1831-1911) who introduced southern Slavs to Britain. Between 1861 and 1863 they made several trips to Bosnia, Albania and Montenegro but spent most of their time in Serbia. Their intention to advocate for liberating the Christian Slavs from the 'Turkish yoke' is seen throughout their book which was published in 1867 under the title: *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe*. The authors were so taken with Serbia that they suggested that Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina should belong to Serbia. They showed little consideration for non-Slavs and non-Christians and descended into 'denigratory Balkanism' when they spoke about the Muslims who were portrayed as 'savages, cruel and lawless'. Albanian Catholics were even more disliked by the pro-Slav Mackenzie and Irby, who appeared to them to be worse than their Muslim brethren and were accused of 'making Judas bargains with the Turks'.<sup>124</sup>

Mackenzie and Irby went on to describe Albanians as being considerably less successful in everything when compared with Montenegrins and Serbs. They did not hesitate to describe Albanian women as 'ugly and dirty'. Their work built a negative picture of Albania in Britain, and Andrew Hammond has noted that this denigration was made with the intention of 'undermining the idea of Albanian independence'.<sup>125</sup> Their book was so appealing to the British public that, when the second edition came out in 1877, it was proof-read by Florence Nightingale and prefaced by William Gladstone. Gladstone had, by now, served as Prime Minister, leading a Liberal Government from 1868 to 1874. The book served Gladstone in his repetition of the need to liberate the Christians and to call for overthrowing 'the fabric of Turkish rule over a Serbian people.'<sup>126</sup>

The popularity of Gladstone had risen considerably during 1876, when he accused the Porte of atrocities against the Bulgarians and criticised Disraeli's Conservative government for 'concealing the wholesale massacres' of the Christian population in the Balkans. Simultaneously, he praised the Serbs for their bravery against the Porte.<sup>127</sup>

Gladstone was not alone in spreading his liberal view on Muslim Ottoman rule in the Balkans. By the 1870s this view became increasingly anti-Islamic and was mainly spread by

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<sup>124</sup> Hammond, pp. 149-151.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, p. 169.

<sup>126</sup> Georgina Muir Mackenzie and Adeline Paulina Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe* (London: Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1877), pp. VII-XIV.

<sup>127</sup> William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (New York: Lovell, Adam, Wesson & Company, 1876), pp. 26-27.

those who supported the Greeks during the war of independence. The ‘Bulgarian atrocities’ of 1876 further heated the public debate in Britain concerning the role of the Ottomans in the Balkans.<sup>128</sup> The circle of intellectuals supporting Gladstone’s religious view, widened and came to include Liberal politicians such as Lord John Russell, William Harcourt, the Duke of Argyll, John Bright and intellectuals such as Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Carlyle and many others.<sup>129</sup> In 1876 Thomas Carlyle wrote to *The Times* calling on the British and European governments for the ‘immediate and summery expulsion of the Turks from Europe.’ He proposed that some ‘Mongol inhabitants,’ as he called the Turks or probably all Muslims, should be allowed to stay if they were peaceful but he insisted that the ‘governing Turk should be ordered to disappear from Europe and never to return.’<sup>130</sup>

Gladstone’s passionate political and intellectual activities inspired Oscar Wilde to write ‘Sonnet on the Massacres of Bulgarian Christians’. It is known that Wilde wrote the sonnet after he read Gladstone’s essay ‘Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East.’<sup>131</sup> At the same time Gladstone managed to convince Alfred Tennyson, another well-known British poet, to take up the role of the ‘Montenegrin’s Byron’. Neither of these poets had ever set foot in the Balkans, nor had Gladstone save his one-day trip to Albania. However, Tennyson wrote a poem which was published in the *Nineteenth Century Magazine* and which was accompanied by an ‘account of Montenegro penned by William Gladstone’.<sup>132</sup> In the popular poem *Montenegro*, Tennyson praised Montenegrin warriors for beating ‘Turkish Islam.’<sup>133</sup> In his accompaniment, Gladstone wrote that Montenegrins were intellectually comparable to other European nations because ‘their leaders carried the printing press into the mountains and used it to print laws,’ but mostly because they fought for ‘freedom and

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128 Cathie Carmichael, *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans – Nationalism and the Destruction of Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 22.

129 Heraclides Alexis and Diaila Ada, eds., *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century: Setting the Precedent* (Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 155.

130 Philip Broadhead and Damian Keown, *Can Faith Make Peace?: Holy Wars and the Resolution of Religious Conflict* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 77-78.

131 Marija Krivokapić and Neil Diamond, *Images of Montenegro in Anglo-American Creative Writing and Film* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), p. 26.

132 Tim Youngs, ed., *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (London: Anthem Press, 2006), p. 28.

133 Alfred Tennyson, ‘Montenegro’, *The Nineteenth Century* 5 (1877), pp. 358-359 (p. 358) <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/2659236/fulltextPDF/A4FEDBBC5E8B41CFPQ/1?accountid=14664>> [accessed 15 December 2016].



Christianity'. In addition, Gladstone pleaded with the readers to show sympathy and offer support to Montenegrins because they were a Christian nation.<sup>134</sup>

By praising the Montenegrins and asking the British public to support Montenegro in 1877, and earlier making the same call about other Christian nations such as the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians, Gladstone had completed his circle around Albania. From the fact that Gladstone never mentioned Albania or Albanians, we may suggest that he either ignored their existence or regarded them as simply being Ottoman Muslims. The Russo-Turkish War had started a year earlier in 1876, and all Balkan countries that were praised by Gladstone were advancing towards the four *vilayets* that the Albanians regarded as their own.

By now Gladstone had established his Liberalism and won the support of the British public, but the Conservative government held a different view and applied a different policy towards the Balkans. At this time Disraeli, who showed little or no consideration for religion and some sympathy for Albanians, was in power. The political clash between Disraeli's Conservatives and Gladstone's Liberals was fierce and the Albanian question would often come up in the process.

## Conclusion

The Western European writers of the eighteenth century viewed the Balkans as another part of Europe, as the 'East' or 'European Turkey'. These writers used paradoxes, perceptions and assumptions to create a negative image of the Balkans. In their works, the Balkans and within it Albania, appeared as a place which was divided from Europe and therefore different. A clearer picture of the Balkans and Albania was created in Britain by the nineteenth century travel writers, which resulted in raising interest in the region.

The two groups of nineteenth century travel writers in Britain applied two criteria, religious and non-religious, when creating an image of Albania. Religion played an important role and produced prejudices against Albania. The views of Lord Byron on Albania, the representative of the non-religious group, did not prevail in Britain. While these views

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<sup>134</sup> Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 130; Antonello Biagini and Giovanna Motta, eds., *Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 2 (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 190.

made an impact on future travel writers, in Britain Lord Byron did not become known because of his work on Albania, a country he loved and idealised and where he is still remembered and held in high regard.

Despite this, both Liberals and Conservatives based their political ideas regarding the Balkans and Albania on Lord Byron's legacy. Byron served as an inspiration for the British public and politicians which were sharply divided into two camps. This division created a reflection in British politics, which in turn contributed to further shaping Gladstone's political views and initiated a debate between the Conservatives and Liberals on Albania. Disraeli and Gladstone visited Albania, but responded to it very differently. Disraeli visited Albania because he was inspired by Byron. Disraeli and his Conservative followers viewed Albania from the same non-religious position as Byron had. Yet because Lord Byron joined the war of liberation in Greece, he also became an idol of Gladstonian Liberals who maintained that the Balkan Christians should be freed from the 'Turkish yoke' and they should follow Byron's example. It is hard to believe that Byron would have approved of the liberation of the Balkans in the way that the Liberals called for. Yet it is not difficult to see the enormous effect that Byron had created on the British public and politics.

As will also be seen in next chapter, the Conservatives under Disraeli, showed some consideration for the Albanian national cause while the Liberals of Gladstone refused to recognise Albanians as a nationality. Disraeli, by showing sympathy for Albania, took on the views of Lord Byron. Disraeli's views did not create a long lasting impact on British public opinion and politics but he remained known as a sympathiser of the Albanian national cause. As late as 1939 *The Manchester Guardian* noted that in British news Albania 'generally recalls a few names: Scanderbeg, Ali Pasha, the Lion of Janina, and – Benjamin Disraeli'.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> 'Miscellany: Disraeli Goes Albanian', *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 April 1939, p. 6.

## CHAPTER II

### The Congress of Berlin and the Albanian Question in the Governments of Disraeli and Gladstone 1878-1881

*Lord Goschen and Lord Fitzmaurice on the Eastern Roumelia Commission strongly favoured forming a large and independent Albania. Lord Fitzmaurice took very great interest in Albania and corresponded with me about it for fifteen years. He maintained that had an Albanian state been then formed both the Balkans and Europe would have been spared much bloodshed; each of the respective peoples would have had a fair share and balanced each other. But the prejudice against Muslims was then too strong. – Edith Durham.<sup>136</sup>*

#### Introduction

The main subject of this chapter is the Albanian Question during the period 1878-1881 and the policies of the Disraeli and Gladstone governments in response to developments in the Ottoman Empire. The gradual disintegration of the Empire, which began early in the nineteenth century, brought the fate of Albania to the attention of the European Powers. In territories that the Empire was losing, new countries were being created and they all had support from one or more of the Powers. Greece, which was supported by most of the Powers but primarily by Britain and France, gained independence in 1829. Serbia and Montenegro were previously autonomous but became independent during the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and were supported unreservedly by Russia.

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<sup>136</sup> Edith Durham, Albania- Special Afternoon Lecture at Royal Institution of Great Britain, 4 February 1941, MS 405/203.

The creation of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and the territorial expansions of Greece alarmed the Albanians, who had felt relatively comfortable within the Empire until they began to feel the consequences of the Russo–Turkish war of April 1877–January 1878. In this war, Russia and Serbia had helped the insurrection of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina while their ally, Montenegro, attacked Ottoman territories of Albania. While the Russians helped Bulgaria, Serbia attacked the Ottomans on the southern border and reached the edge of modern day Kosovo. The Albanian leadership believed that their neighbouring countries were expanding unjustly into their territories and that the Empire was neither willing nor able to protect them any longer. These border changes and the question of Albanian nationality will take centre stage in the second part of this chapter.

The Powers at the Congress of Berlin showed little regard for national criteria when deciding the new borders. As a result of the border changes, refugees flooded those Albanian territories which still remained under Ottoman sovereignty. This fact radicalised the political views of the Albanian leaders and led them to look for ways of organising themselves. They took steps to act as a coherent nationality by forming a League and tried to act as a government in order to take care of the territory and the population.

The Albanian League, in seeking to secure a place among the new nations in the Balkans, asked the Disraeli government to take their case to the Congress of Berlin, where the creation of new states was being sanctioned. The British delegation in Berlin, headed by the Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, showed some consideration for the Albanian Question but viewed Albania as a territory which should continue its existence within the Ottoman Empire. The priority of Disraeli's and Gladstone's governments was to maintain the presence of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, which meant no creation of an autonomous or independent Albanian state.

Supporting the Albanian request for autonomy or independence would mean ending Ottoman rule in Europe and, for Disraeli, that was not in the interest of British foreign policy. Disraeli's Conservative government maintained that the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in Europe would bring Russia into the Balkans and consequently to the Aegean and Mediterranean, thus endangering the route to India, Britain's main interest in

the region. While in power, Disraeli made it known that, if necessary, Britain would go to war in order to stop Russia's access to the Bosphorus and the Balkans.

So far, British involvement in the Albanian Question during the period 1878–1881 has not been studied. The initial part of the chapter therefore seeks to expand on previous studies by utilising new sources and offering new analyses and greater scrutiny. There is also a need, particularly among Albanians, to better understand this period of history and the importance of British involvement.

#### The international context - from San Stefano to the Congress of Berlin

In early January 1878, the most north-western coastal town of the Ottoman Empire, Antivari, fell into the hands of Montenegrins who had joined the war against the Porte, on the side of the Russians. The town was taken during an armistice agreed upon by the Porte on one side and the Russians and their allies on the other.<sup>137</sup> The Montenegrin army refused to acknowledge the ceasefire and expelled the population of the town, whose inhabitants were Albanian Muslims and Catholics.<sup>138</sup> The territories the Montenegrins occupied were almost entirely inhabited by Albanians, who were forced to leave their homes and properties behind and never to return. Towns like Shkodra could not cope with the refugees who grew in number as the war dragged on.

The refugee problem soon became an international issue, causing great embarrassment to the Porte and some of the Great Powers. In Constantinople, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, Count Ferenc Zichy, told the British ambassador, Henry Layard, that his government was deeply embarrassed by the entrance of some 30,000 Albanian refugees who had fled into Austro-Hungarian territory following the fall of Antivari and other places. The Austro-Hungarians were not prepared for such a situation and simply could not cope, yet, unable to convince the Montenegrins to take them back, the numbers of refugees continued to grow. Meanwhile, the Montenegrins and Serbs were moving everywhere they could without any regard for armistice conditions. As a result, Zichy was instructed to ask

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<sup>137</sup> Green to Layard, 12 & 13 January 1878, NA, FO, 424/67, Nr. 537 & 538, Enclosure 1 & 2 in 537.

<sup>138</sup> Green to Darby, 13 January 1878, NA, FO, 424/67, Nr. 200.

the Porte if they were capable of holding their military positions on the frontlines and if possible not to abandon any military post.<sup>139</sup>

On the northern border of the Ottoman Empire, the Serbian army was advancing with similar speed and causing the same strategic dilemma as the Montenegrins. By June 1878, the Serbs had expelled the Albanians from their conquered territories. At the end of February Rifat Pasha, the *vali* (governor) of Prishtina, asked the British vice consul Harry Cooper if he could ask his government, or even British charitable institutions, for help in tackling the Albanian refugee crisis, whose number, he said, was over 100,000. Cooper believed that the number of refugees was exaggerated, but there was little doubt the refugees had become an unbearable burden for the Ottoman regime. Their presence had worsened an already tense situation, with some of the refugees and bashi-bazouks (irregular or paramilitary soldiers of the Ottoman army) instigating revenge attacks on the Christian population with the *vali* unable to prevent it.<sup>140</sup> In the *vilayets* of Kosovo and Manastir the number of refugees was over 140,000. A British investigator, Cullen, who was appointed by the Powers to look into the situation of the Muslims in 'European Turkey', reported a difficult situation. Other British diplomats, including Edmund Calvert, sent reports with horrendous news about Muslims being forced to leave their homes in places that were lost by the Porte.<sup>141</sup> However, this hardly made any news in the British or European press, which supported Liberal ideas and continued to report mainly on the situation of the Christians.

On 3 March 1878 the Porte was forced to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. This effectively constituted a Russian diktat and an autonomous Bulgaria was formed as a result. The borders of Bulgaria penetrated deep into Albanian lands. Serbia and Montenegro, being in the camp of the victors, gained considerable swathes of Kosovo and Albania.<sup>142</sup> To the Albanians themselves, the Porte had shown little or no regard for their four *vilayets*, and the Treaty of San Stefano saw the Albanian leadership react swiftly. From Constantinople, Layard forwarded to London several letters that were addressed to him by Albanian

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<sup>139</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 9 April 1878, NA, FO, 424/69, Nr. 399.

<sup>140</sup> Cooper to Freeman, 28 February 1878, NA, FO, 424/69, Enclosure in Nr. 39.

<sup>141</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile – the Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1995), pp. 90-94.

<sup>142</sup> NA, FO, 925/3051, See Appendix 1.

delegates from the affected territories and from other parts of northern Albania, protesting against the annexation of their lands to Montenegro. The Christian and Muslim Albanians of Kosovo objected to the political decisions taken at San Stefano and were not prepared to see their territory ceded to Bulgaria or Serbia.<sup>143</sup> Inhabitants of Dibra dispatched a petition against being included in Bulgaria.<sup>144</sup>

The British General Consul in Albania, Kirby Green, sent an advisory letter to his superior, the Marquis of Salisbury (1830-1903), concerning the Treaty of San Stefano. Montenegro, a small and landlocked country, had tripled in size under the terms of the Treaty. He suggested that the borders envisaged at San Stefano would engender a major problem among the Albanians and maintained that this ominous possibility should not be lightly accepted by European elites. Explaining the meaning of the situation on the ground and its consequences, he wrote:

The Porte has handed over, by a stroke of pen, to Montenegro some of the most influential and hardy of the Roman Catholic mountain tribes. [...] The barrier which might and ought to have been raised against Slav encroachment is thus broken through.<sup>145</sup>

As a result of the Treaty of San Stefano, Albanians gave up their hope of any further support from Constantinople. They came to believe that the Ottoman army, which consisted mainly of Syrian and other Middle Eastern conscripts, was not putting up a serious defence along the northern border of the Empire where their land touched both Serbian and Montenegrin territory. Albanian leaders were readying themselves to convince the population to resist any attempt to enforce the Treaty of San Stefano on the ground. A number of spontaneous meetings were held throughout northern and eastern Albania where demands for action were heard. Albanians, in the north-west, around the border with Montenegro, formed a league whose members swore 'to resist until death all attempts coming from abroad or from the Supreme Government [the Porte] to change the present state of their territory.'<sup>146</sup> The league took steps to establish contacts with the Albanians of the north as far as Prishtina, east as far as Dibra and Ohri, and south to Janina,

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<sup>143</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 18 May 1878, NA, FO, 424/70, Nr. 700.

<sup>144</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 4 May 1878, NA, FO, 424/70, Nr. 382.

<sup>145</sup> Green to Salisbury, 12 April 1878, NA, FO, 424/70, Nr. 511.

<sup>146</sup> Green to Salisbury, 3 May 1878, NA, FO, 424/70, Nr. 361.

which led them to hold a far bigger meeting with greater political significance. Meanwhile, the British government and most of the Powers were getting ready to reject San Stefano and organise another peace conference.

### The Albanian League and the Congress of Berlin

Until 1878 there was no political organisation claiming to represent the whole of Albania or demanding a political solution to their plight. Before 1878 Albanian leaders were engaged in three political projects. The first was the struggle of the Albanians of the north (Malësia) who were seeking self-governance. They refused to accept the political consequences announced in the Porte's reform program and in doing so sought to preserve, or even extend, their traditional way of self-governance. The second project was religious in essence and concerned the Albanian Catholics who lived semi-autonomously in Mirdita. They aimed for wider autonomy or even to establish their own independent principality. The third political project was the demand for independence which came from the Albanians living in colonies abroad in Italy, Egypt, Romania and Constantinople.<sup>147</sup>

This cluster of Albanian groups and their activities were narrow and local in character and, as such, did not cover the entire scope of the Albanian issue. After the Treaty of San Stefano this matter became more acute. The Albanian elite, who resided mainly in Constantinople and feared the threat of further territorial losses, believed it necessary to organise at the highest level in order to represent the entire national cause. When it became clear that the Powers of Europe would not accept the Treaty of San Stefano and were gathering to revise it in Berlin, Albanian leaders decided to hold a general assembly to discuss the matter.

On 10 June 1878, around 300 delegates from all parts of the four *vilayets* assembled in the town of Prizren in Kosovo. The meeting, which lasted two weeks, was held in the compounds of a *medrese* (Muslim religious school) and the proceedings were conducted in utmost secrecy.<sup>148</sup> The Porte did not try to stop the gathering, nor did it interfere in any of its activities during the assembly. After electing Ilaz Pasha Dibra as president, the assembly

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<sup>147</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>148</sup> Jovan Hadži-Vasiljević, *Arbanaska Liga*, (Beograd: Ratnik, 1909), pp. 39-40.



formed a military organisation and called it Lidhja (League), which later was to be known as the Albanian League or the League of Prizren (Lidhja e Prizrenit), named after the town in which it was formed. The assembly passed both the *Kararname* (Resolution) of the League and the *Talimat* (Instructions) for the organisation of a government administration and the creation of an army. A decree of eight points was also passed which dealt with army organisation and its deployment.<sup>149</sup>

For more than a week the assembly, dominated by conservative<sup>150</sup> landlords and a sultanist movement, which favoured a moderate approach towards the Porte, did not tackle the issues related to reforms, schools or autonomy. They did not even discuss the issue of uniting the four *vilayets* into one, which was the aim of the radicals,<sup>151</sup> led by Abdyl Frashëri (1839-1892).<sup>152</sup> As a matter of fact the League was, to a great degree, an initiative led by activists from a group of Albanian elites and intellectuals in Constantinople represented in Prizren by Frashëri. Therefore, the League also represented the differences that existed between those Albanian intellectuals who lived abroad and powerful landlords and traditional clan leaders at home. However, both wings, radicals and moderates, agreed from the beginning to defend the integrity of Albanian lands but remain under the Ottoman umbrella.

When the League ended its two weeks of sessions, the leaders of all sides agreed to put a request to the Porte for uniting the four *vilayets* into one politically autonomous administrative and territorial unit. British newspapers, such as *The Spectator*, wrote that Albanians were determined 'to be governed by Albanian Committees, elected by universal suffrage.'<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> See full text of these documents in: Robert Elsie, '*The Resolutions of the League of Prizren*', <[http://www.albanianhistory.net/1878\\_League-of-Prizren/index.html](http://www.albanianhistory.net/1878_League-of-Prizren/index.html)> [accessed 10 July 2015].

<sup>150</sup> The conservative branch of the League was also known as moderates because of the stance they initially held towards the Sultan, but their position changed later. Ali Pasha Guçia, Omer Pasha Vrioni and Abedin Pasha Dino were considered moderates. At the beginning of June 1880, the Sultan intended to appoint Abedin Pasha as Prime Minister. Abedin Pasha was known in Constantinople as an energetic liberal and reformer and came from a powerful family in south Albania. The Sultan thought it proper to have an Albanian lead his government while the borders, involving mainly Albania, were to be rectified. The Sultan, surrounded by conservatives, gave up his intention and Abedin Pasha was given the position of Foreign Minister. See: NA FO 424/99, Nr. 302.

<sup>151</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 221.

<sup>152</sup> Abdyl Frashëri came from a well-known family from the south and with his brothers, Sami and Naim, was among the most prominent intellectuals in Albanian culture and politics. In Prizren, Abdyl was elected president of the Committee for Foreign Relations and became the most important personality of the League.

<sup>153</sup> 'The Albanian League', *Spectator* 5 October 1878, p. 2 <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/5th-october-1878/2/the-albanian-league-has-completely-thrown-off-the->> [accessed 13 June 2015].

Many observers, including Kirby Green, claimed that the Porte was behind the Albanian League. Others, mainly Slavs, believed that it was Britain who had set up the League. A great number of politicians, intellectuals and newspapers in Russia went even further by saying that the League did not really exist. According to them, not only was the League a figment of imagination put forward by the Sublime Porte in order to stop the implementation of the Treaty of Berlin, but there was in fact no Albanian nation save a few tribes.<sup>154</sup>

Several weeks before the Albanian League was formed, the Powers had been preparing for a peace conference. In London, following his appointment as Foreign Secretary, the Marquess of Salisbury produced a policy statement concerning his vision for British foreign policy. The document, known as the Salisbury Circular of 1 April 1878, became famous in the world of European diplomacy. The Circular principally called for a review of the Treaty of San Stefano. A big and strong Slav Bulgaria, under the control of Russia, was a prospect that the British could not accept and the extension of Bulgaria into Greek and Albanian lands was considered a territorial severance of the Porte.<sup>155</sup> It was also made clear that London would preserve the presence of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, which left no place to discuss the Albanian Question as a separate issue.

In Constantinople, Layard had suggested that the Sultan appoint a 'credible Turk like Sadik Pasha', as head of the Ottoman delegation, to which the Sultan agreed. To Layard's surprise, a few days before the start of the Congress, the Sultan changed his mind. He told Layard that he had appointed Karatheodory Pasha and Mehmet Ali Pasha as plenipotentiaries who were to be joined by Sadullah Bey, the Ottoman ambassador in Berlin.<sup>156</sup> Karatheodory was a Greek Christian born in Berlin and, being the son of the Sultan's personal doctor, had made a successful career in Ottoman politics. At the Congress he was the principal representative of the Ottoman Empire and also held the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs. As he struggled to preserve Ottoman interests, he was 'constantly and rudely snubbed by Bismarck' who told him on many occasions that he was there 'only to accept what the Powers dictated'.<sup>157</sup> Mehmet Ali Pasha was born in

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<sup>154</sup> Bernard Stulli, *Albansko Pitanje 1875-1882* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti, 1972), p. 346.

<sup>155</sup> Robert William Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question* (New York: Norton & Co, 1972), p. 380.

<sup>156</sup> See: Layard Papers, MSS 39149, Nr. 505.

<sup>157</sup> Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1916), p. 82.

Magdeburg, Germany, and was originally called Ludwig Karl Detroit. As a young man he went to Constantinople, joined the Ottoman army, became a Muslim and climbed to the military grade of Marshall.<sup>158</sup> During the Congress, it was noted that Bismarck addressed him dismissively as *der Magdeburger*. The Albanians called him Ali Pashë Maxhari (Ali Pasha – the Hungarian). He was well-known among the Albanians and was deeply unpopular because he had led a mission a few years earlier to disarm them.<sup>159</sup> A few weeks after the Congress, in Kosovo, Mehmet Ali Pasha became the first victim of the Treaty of Berlin.

In Europe the Powers hurried to secure their positions before the beginning of the Congress. All made secret contact with each other and some signed agreements, with Britain signing a total of three secret agreements between March and June. The Secret Protocol of 30 May was signed with Russia, while the Anglo-Turkish Convention was signed on 4 June. Two days later, Britain signed the last arrangement with Austria-Hungary and with this the preparation for Berlin was complete. None of these agreements touched on the Albanian Question. However, Albania was mentioned in another secret agreement, the Budapest Convention, which was reached between Austria–Hungary and Russia, signed on 15 January. The third article of the second convention, which was signed on 18 March 1877, dealt with the future of the Balkans in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. If this was to happen, Russia was not to interfere directly in the Balkans, no large Slavic state was to be created and Albania, as well as Bulgaria, might become independent.<sup>160</sup>

In Berlin the Albanian Question was not discussed as a separate or independent issue as there was no power to bring it to the agenda. Among the Albanians there was some hope that Italy might raise the question, since during 1876 Francesco Crispi, President of the Italian Parliament and himself of Albanian origin, had expressed to the Powers the Italian interest in Albania.<sup>161</sup> Crispi visited Bismarck, who considered the Italian conquest of Albania a possibility. He told Crispi that Germany would not break with Vienna for the sake of Italy, but if Austria-Hungary were to take Bosnia and Herzegovina then Rome would be

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<sup>158</sup> Medicott, *Congress of Berlin*, p. 44.

<sup>159</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 222.

<sup>160</sup> Medicott, *Congress of Berlin*, p. 2.

<sup>161</sup> Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, p. 48.

free to take Albania.<sup>162</sup> However, in March 1877 there was a change of government in Rome and the new Italian government decided to take a neutral position on this matter. The Albanian League sent a delegation to Berlin but Bismarck, then head of the Congress, refused to meet them. The memorandum that the Albanian League sent to Disraeli produced no effect. Albania was thus discussed only as a secondary question in moments when the borders of Montenegro, Serbia and Greece were discussed.

During the main session of the Congress, the Albanian Question came up only in fragments. The French delegate, Saint-Valier, proposed to the Congress to continue securing the rights of Albanian Catholics of Mirdita that they enjoyed on the basis of *ab antico*. The proposal was rejected by the Porte and the British.<sup>163</sup> Although the French and the Austro-Hungarians insisted that the issue was linked with the traditional autonomy and rights of the Christian population, the proposal did not pass. Instead, a compromise was made: the Ottomans agreed not to make any new changes regarding the status of Mirdita and this was included as a statement in the text of the Treaty.<sup>164</sup>

Austria-Hungary was behind the Mirdita issue. They had managed to mark Albania, or at least the northern part which was inhabited by Albanian Catholics, as their zone of interest. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary succeeded in winning the right to build a road and railway extension from Herzegovina, through Montenegro, to Albania.<sup>165</sup> Austria-Hungary did not succeed in becoming established militarily near Shkodra, as it had hoped, but compared with her rival, Italy, Vienna had by far emerged as a winner from the Congress. Austria-Hungary became territorially linked with Albania on the frontiers of Kosovo, through the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar. Article XXV of the Treaty allowed an Austro-Hungarian military presence in Sanjak but the place was to remain part of the *Vilayet* of Kosovo and as such under the Sultan's sovereign rights. Therefore, the administration remained in the hands of the Ottomans.<sup>166</sup> However, from Sanjak the Austro-Hungarians were only a few miles from the railway station of Mitrovica in Kosovo. They were coming close to Salonika, the place they planned to occupy in the case of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>162</sup> Pyrrhus J. Ruches, *Albania's Captives* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965), p. 57.

<sup>163</sup> Salisbury emphasised that this may cause difficulties as this matter asked to sanction privileges which were not clear and by which, the Congress would give international recognition to the Albanian local customary law.

<sup>164</sup> Henry Fraser Munro, *The Berlin Congress* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1918), pp. 99-100.

<sup>165</sup> Stulli, pp. 336-337.

<sup>166</sup> Kenneth Morrison and Elizabeth Roberts, *The Sandžak: A History* (London: Hurst, 2013), pp. 61-62.

## Perceptions in Britain of the Albanians as a nationality

During the nineteenth century, as we saw earlier, the Liberals managed to impose religion as an essential element in the British understanding of the rise of nationalism in the Balkans. Crucially, many politicians, historians and the public in Britain and Europe viewed the Eastern Question through the prism of Christians living under the 'barbarous and infidel state' of the Ottomans.<sup>167</sup> The rise of new states was considered as a struggle of new Christian nations against the Ottoman Empire, which was viewed as Muslim in essence.

Albanians did not fit easily into this framework. The majority of the population were Muslim, and although Albanians were integrated into the Ottoman system, some Albanian leaders were nevertheless looking for an exit strategy, as they felt the collapse of the empire was drawing near. The Albanians were the first nation with a Muslim majority to have risen against the Porte and demand autonomy or independence.

As Chapter I explained, the existence of a distinct Albanian identity was noticed by British travellers in the Balkans long before the Congress of Berlin. Most travel writers observed that the Albanians constituted a separate ethnicity from those that surrounded them or indeed even a nation, being distinct in origin, language, tradition, religion, behaviour and dress. It is necessary to recall Hobhouse's notes on this matter:

It is certain that the Christians who can fairly be called Albanians are scarcely, if at all, to be distinguished from the Mahometans [Muslims]. They carry arms, and many of them are enrolled in the service of Ali [Pasha], and differ in no respect from his other soldiers. There is a spirit of independence and a love of their country in the whole people which, in a great measure, does away the vast distinction observable in other parts of Turkey between the followers of the two religions; for when the natives of other provinces, upon being asked who they are, will say, "We are Turks," or "We are Christians," a man of this country answers, "I am an Albanian".<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire 1815-1914* (Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>168</sup> Lord Broughton, *Travels in Albania and other provinces of Turkey in 1809 & 1810, Vol. I* (London: Murray, 1858), p. 138.

It is also useful to recall, once again, Lord Byron's impressions of Albanians. Concerning their religion, nationality, behaviour and the position that the Albanians held in the eyes of their neighbouring nations, Byron wrote:

No nation are so detested and dreaded by their neighbours as the Albanese; the Greeks hardly regard them as Christians, or the Turks as Moslems, and in fact they are a mixture of both, and sometimes neither.<sup>169</sup>

Ali Pasha's rule had contributed to furthering these characteristics. His role was important even after his death although his intention was not to create a nation state, the legacy he left behind was used by the Albanian elite to build their nationalist platform. After his death, northern Albania, together with Kosovo, gradually became the cradle of nationalist activities and uprisings against the Porte.<sup>170</sup>

The beginning of what became known as the 'Albanian National Renaissance' or *Rilindja* (Revival) took place in the early 1830s and did not differ considerably from other national movements in the Balkans.<sup>171</sup> However, the Albanians did not manage to create a single and united representative body before 1878 with the formation of the Albanian League. The League, established as a result of nationalist ideas circulating among the Albanian elite, became the first political organisation to be accepted by the population at large.<sup>172</sup> As a result of the border conflicts with Greece and Montenegro, the League, directed from Prizren, became active in Janina and Shkodra. The League proved capable of threatening northern Greece and Montenegro militarily. In the north the League had permanently mobilised 30,000 armed men while in the south it was prepared to put 40,000 men under arms within a short time. Regarding the situation in the south, the League made it known that if the Powers and the Porte gave any territory in Epirus to Greece, the Albanians would proclaim independence and demand a protectorate guaranteed by a European Power. The British Consul in Corfu informed London that this menacing attitude within the Albanian

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<sup>169</sup> George Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron: Including the Suppressed Poems* (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1831), p. 88.

<sup>170</sup> See: Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). Hobsbawm argues that national awareness develops unevenly among the social groups and parts of regions of a country. In the Albanian case, it first appeared in the south then it was transferred to the north.

<sup>171</sup> Pirro Misha 'Invention of Nationalism: Myth and Amnesia' in *Albanian Identities – Myth and History*, eds., by Stephanie Schwandner and Bernard Fisher (London: Hurst, 2002) p. 33. - As elsewhere in the Balkans, Albanian nationalism begun as an elite phenomenon. The idea of the Albanian nation originated among intellectuals in Europe, Constantinople and other centres of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>172</sup> Hobsbawm, p. 12. Hobsbawm further argues that national consciousness starts among the elites and becomes accepted and re-moulded by the masses.

League came out of their sense of being a separate national group, coupled with religious fanaticism and secret encouragement from abroad, particularly from Italy.<sup>173</sup>

The Congress of Berlin did not open the door for the Albanian League, although the League made efforts to prove it was capable of representing the entire nation. As we have already seen, Bismarck had previously declared that he did not recognise the existence of a distinct Albanian nation. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary cared only for the Albanian Catholics while other Powers, except Britain, remained silent on this matter. In the memorandum submitted to Disraeli, the League asked the British government to make the Albanian case at the Congress of Berlin. The memorandum, which became the political program of the League, explained their historical background and went on to explain and affirm both Albanian nationality and the country's frontiers:

All we want is to be Albanian. Albania cannot be united with Greece. Profound differences in nationality, language, customs and culture would make such a union untenable [...] Albania will never stand the Slavic domination. Albanian will never be Turkish [...] From Boyana [the river bordering Montenegro] to the gates of Janina there is one compact and homogenous core of population, with common characteristics and a common national identity.<sup>174</sup>

Explaining why Britain should undertake such a role, the memorandum elaborated:

Only Great Britain can take up our requests and make them heard at the Congress. In doing so, it will not lack the support of the other Powers who have recognised our political existence and destiny from the moment the principle of nationality became the primary basis of European public law. Independent of the issue of justice, Great Britain has great interest in creating an impregnable cordon to check the Slavic invasion advancing and flooding towards the Adriatic, and this cordon must and can only be created by the peoples who are most imperilled by the inexorable threat of their neighbours [...] Great Britain, that

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<sup>173</sup> Sebright to Salisbury, 25 January 1879, NA, FO, 424/80, Nr. 7, Enclosure 1.

<sup>174</sup> Memorandum to Lord Beaconsfield, *Robert Elsie* <[http://www.albanianhistory.net/1878\\_Memorandum/index.html](http://www.albanianhistory.net/1878_Memorandum/index.html)> [accessed 5 June 2014].

ancient seat and mistress of liberty for all peoples, foremost among all the Powers has recognised the right of other nations to their independence.<sup>175</sup>

The memorandum underlined the Russian threat as a common interest of the Albanians and the British. However, while the British government and its delegation to the Congress recognised the existence of the Albanian nationality, no steps were taken to sponsor their request. Whenever members of Disraeli's government and the Conservative Party considered the Albanian issue, they came under strong criticism from the Liberal opposition. The harshest criticism was directed at Salisbury, who, as Foreign Secretary, received a delegation from the Albanian League. The two delegates, Abdyl Frashëri and Mehmet Vrioni, arrived in London after meeting high officials in Rome and Paris.<sup>176</sup> Salisbury saw them on 12 May 1879. Both delegates were former Deputies to the Ottoman Parliament from the region of Janina.

Among other issues, these two delegates discussed the issues of language, education and religion which posed problems for the Albanian national cause in the south. At that time the Albanians lacked a unified alphabet and had adopted Greek as their language of education because the use of the Albanian language was prohibited by the Porte. Albanians in the south spoke Greek and were educated in this language in Janina. The Albanian delegates told Salisbury that the language issue should not confuse him, arguing that it would be an error to classify these Albanians as either Greeks or exclusively as Christian. They also stated that a large number of Christian Albanians lived in the north and the south of Albania but had no desire to be included in Greece or Montenegro. Of a population of 600,000 in South Albania, about 60,000 spoke Greek, but these were only men and the figure excluded both women and children.<sup>177</sup>

With regard to other points, raised during the meeting, Salisbury wrote:

They desire to lay their wishes and their claims with all humility before the European Powers in the hope that justice would be done to them; but they did not conceal their resolution to persevere in resistance to alien domination which for many centuries their fathers had maintained. Whatever the results of the

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Green to Salisbury, 20 April 1879, NA, FO, 424/83, Nr. 70.

<sup>177</sup> Salisbury to Layard, 12 May 1879, NA, FO, 424/83, Nr. 298.



pending discussion might be, the King of Greece would only become master of any portion of Albania if he was able to subdue it by the force of arms.<sup>178</sup>

Salisbury did not express to the delegates any opinion concerning their national cause, remaining cautious and declaring no official position on the matter. He advised them to continue to provide other Powers in Constantinople with information of this kind. He informed Layard that he had told the two Albanian delegates that 'it was the wish of the Powers to do impartial justice to all races which inhabit the Balkan Peninsula.'<sup>179</sup>

In the House of Commons, the Liberal MP Charles Dilke argued that the members of this delegation could not be considered representatives of the Albanian nation, as they had introduced themselves. He said they were Ottoman paid functionaries and the Porte did not prevent their visit to Europe.<sup>180</sup> During the meeting the Albanian delegation handed a memorandum to Salisbury, and from London went to Berlin in the hope of meeting Bismarck.<sup>181</sup> Prince Bismarck, however, refused to see them. Back in the House of Commons, Dilke suggested that Salisbury should have acted the same way.

When Janina and the border with Greece were discussed, Conservatives asked the House to consider Albanians a nationality. Robert Bourke, MP and Undersecretary Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Disraeli's government, expressed this opinion and added, 'there is a strong Albanian nationality', and they, being 'an ancient and historic race,' will not give up their land without a fight.<sup>182</sup> A year later, the Liberal MP Joseph Cowen asked Prime Minister Gladstone 'whether, in seeking to extend Montenegrin territory in the north and the Greek territory in the south, regard will be had to the [Albanian] nationality in the centre?'

Gladstone, although not known as a friend of the Albanians, recognised their nationality. He replied diplomatically:

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> House of Common Debate, 17 April 1879 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1879/apr/17/treaty-of-berlin-protocol-13-greece-and>> [accessed 9 May 2014].

<sup>181</sup> The memorandum offers the view of the League regarding the Albanians in the south and the border with Greece. Memorandum was communicated to Salisbury by Albanian Delegates, 12 May 1879, NA, FO, 424/83 Nr. 286.

<sup>182</sup> HC Debate, 22 July 1879 <[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1879/jul/22/motion-for-an-address#S3V0248P0\\_18790722\\_HOC\\_140](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1879/jul/22/motion-for-an-address#S3V0248P0_18790722_HOC_140)> [accessed 9 May 2014].

We are bound to have the same fair regard to all the facts of the case, and to the element of nationality and to the peculiar circumstances of Albania, as we should do in reference to any other portion of territory.<sup>183</sup>

Many Conservative MPs thought Gladstone's approach towards Albania was unfair, believing that he had disregarded Albanian nationality. When the British government pressurised Albanians and the Porte to give Ulqin and its surroundings to Montenegro, Henry Drummond Wolf, a Conservative MP, accused Gladstone of 'plundering Turkey' and 'coercing the Albanian nation'.<sup>184</sup>

However, it should be noted that a group of well-known Liberal politicians and diplomats of the Gladstone circle, consisting of Dilke, Granville, Goschen and Fitzmaurice, recognised the need to accommodate the Albanians within an autonomous or independent state or even in Personal Union with Greece. Throughout 1880 and 1881 they were active in seeking a solution for the Albanians and convincing the British government to apply one of these three options.

From Constantinople, Fitzmaurice proposed measures to be taken regarding reforms in Albania, which were supported by ambassador Goschen.<sup>185</sup> He reminded the Foreign Office of the unsolved Albanian issue, which was causing problems because their nationhood was ignored. He urged Earl Granville:

I venture to submit to Your Lordship, as I have done before, that the Albanian excitement cannot be passed over as a mere manoeuvre conducted by Turks in order to mislead Europe, and evade its will. Nor can it be denied that the Albanian movement is perfectly natural. An ancient and distinct race as any by whom they are surrounded, they have seen the nationality of these neighbouring races taken under the protection of various European Powers, and their aspirations gratified for a more independent existence [...] They see the Eastern Question being solved on the principle of nationality, meanwhile they see that

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<sup>183</sup> HC Debate, 18 June 1880 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/jun/18/the-treaty-of-berlin-execution-of-the>> [accessed 10 May 2014].

<sup>184</sup> HC Debate, 2 September 1880 <[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/sep/02/observations#S3V0256P0\\_18800902\\_HOC\\_209](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/sep/02/observations#S3V0256P0_18800902_HOC_209)> [accessed 19 December 2016].

<sup>185</sup> Fitzmaurice to Granville, 27 July 1880, NA, FO, 424/101, Nr. 32.

[they] themselves do not receive similar treatment. Their nationality is ignored and territory inhabited by Albanians is handed over in the north to the Montenegrins, to satisfy Montenegro, the protégé of Russia, and in the south to Greece, the protégé of England and France. Exchanges of territory are proposed, other difficulties arise, but still it is in expense of Albanians, and Albanians are to be handed over to Slavs and Greeks without reference to the principle of nationality.<sup>186</sup>

Goschen proposed the creation of a strong Albania before the Ottoman Empire collapsed, otherwise Albania would disappear along with the empire. If Albania was to be created as a state, a balance of powers in the Balkans would prevail, otherwise no European Power alone would be able to subdue the Albanians. It would not be wise to break up Albanians and divide their lands because, he said, Albanians are a difficult race to manage. Dividing them into north and south would also be unwise. Therefore, Goschen had an alternative proposal regarding the future of Albania and advised Earl Granville to consider the possibility of 'attaching Albania by a dynastic link to Greece'.<sup>187</sup>

Charles Dilke had a similar plan 'for combining Albanian autonomy with Personal Union with Greece, finding that the Albanians were willing to accept the King of the Hellenes'.<sup>188</sup> The Greek *Chargé d'Affaires* in London, Gennadius, told Dilke that a proposal for a Personal Union between Albania and Greece was made to the king of Greece. The Greek diplomat, wishing to deny Albanians were a nationality, saw this as a predictable move because 'the southern Albanians are to all intents and purposes Greeks but the initiative ought to proceed from the Albanians.'<sup>189</sup>

As Gennadius knew, there had been contacts in the past between the Albanian leaders and Greek government officials. In 1877, Albanian leaders had secretly negotiated with Greece on a joint war against the Porte. However, Abdyl Frashëri had rejected the hypothetical union with Greece and told the Greek delegate, Skouloudis, that the Albanians were determined to 'save the Albanian nationality.' About other ideas expressed during these

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<sup>186</sup> Goschen to Granville, 26 July 1880, NA, FO, 424/101, Nr. 34.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Stephen Gwynn and Gertrude Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke*, (London: John Murray, 1917), p. 328.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328. - On June 1880, in London, Dilke met the King of Greece. They met several times during the two weeks of the king's visit to Britain and discussed chiefly the Albanian Question but there was no agreement.

meetings he said 'they were not the result of hasty thinking or recent events, but the outcome of many years of reflection and discussion, during which Albanians had become aware of the dangers to which their existence as a nation was exposed.'<sup>190</sup>

Goschen thought that the proposed union would be a solution for Europe but he was aware of the difficulties in convincing the Albanians, who were strong in Constantinople and trusted all over the Empire. However, Goschen was convinced that 'the Albanians would and must have an autonomy in some shape'.<sup>191</sup>

On 4 September 1880, the question of Albanian nationality came up again in the House of Commons. Cowen criticised the way the British government was handling the crisis and did not agree with the government helping the Montenegrins to 'take Albanian land without their will or approval.' As he characterised the Albanians as the oldest people in the Balkans and fighters for independence, a loud voice was heard in the House: 'They are not a nationality'. To this Cowen replied:

Not a nationality, his hon. Friend said. That was Prince Bismarck's remark at Berlin. He said he did not know of the existence of the Albanian nation. Such a statement was not at all surprising. Prince Bismarck did not know of the nationality of Denmark or of Holland either. And another Prince, quite as potent then as Prince Bismarck is now, contended at the Congress of Vienna that he did not know of the nationality of Italy.<sup>192</sup>

A small group of MPs, among them Cowen, criticised the Liberal government for having sympathy toward the Slav nationalities but showing no regard to their rivals in the Balkans. Cowen maintained that the Treaty of Berlin was being 'carried out irrespective of nationalities and creeds', while her Majesty's Government and other European powers, by extending Greek and Montenegrin territories, were 'encroaching upon the nationality of Albania'.<sup>193</sup> This group argued that the government was applying the principle of nationality selectively because the government was playing the role of emancipator and liberator of

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<sup>190</sup> Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, p. 55.

<sup>191</sup> Gwynn and Tuckwell, p. 328.

<sup>192</sup> HC Debate, 4 September 1880 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/sep/04/observations>> [accessed 9 May 2014].

<sup>193</sup> HC Debate, 18 June 1880 <[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/jun/18/the-treaty-of-berlin-execution-of-the#S3V0253P0\\_18800618\\_HOC\\_38](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/jun/18/the-treaty-of-berlin-execution-of-the#S3V0253P0_18800618_HOC_38)> [accessed 5 December 2016].

the Christians in the region. Cowen stated that the attitude of the British government toward Albania was the same as that shown toward Ireland but the ignorance the British and other European Powers showed toward Albania was greater than that toward Ireland.<sup>194</sup>

#### Disraeli and Gladstone on the Eastern and Albanian Questions

Speaking about these opinions in Parliament, it is necessary to analyse the attitude of the two leading political personalities of that period. Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone had been leaders of their parties since 1868. Even before 1868, and continuing until their deaths, they together dominated British politics. They came from contrasting social and ethnic backgrounds and differed in many aspects, particularly in foreign affairs and over the Eastern Question. For Disraeli, the Ottoman Empire was a bulwark against a Russian invasion of the British dominions in Asia and potential capture of the route to India. This made Disraeli seek to protect the territories of the Ottoman Empire in Europe against the Russian threat.<sup>195</sup>

When Disraeli took office in his second term (1874–1880), Britain was in a position of isolation on the international stage. He used Britain's colonial possessions and imposing sea power to tell Europe that nothing could happen without British approval. Proclaiming the Queen as Empress of India and assuming the motto *Imperium et Libertas*, Disraeli drew Britain toward interventionism. He upheld the Palmerston doctrine of the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and supported the Porte unreservedly.<sup>196</sup>

According to Disraeli's strategy on the Eastern Question, Russia was an enemy and had to be prevented from advancing into Europe or occupying Constantinople at any cost, even that of war. Disraeli reminded the Queen of this position in a letter he sent from Berlin before the Congress began in 1878. The Congress was to deal with such 'topics as the port

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<sup>194</sup> HC Debate, 4 September 1880 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1880/sep/04/observations>> [accessed 9 May 2014].

<sup>195</sup> John Morley, *The life of William Ewart Gladstone 1878-1898, Vol. II, 1878-1898* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), pp. 183-4.

<sup>196</sup> Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, pp. 551-552.

of Antivari', which he thought would be insignificant, just as he regarded the borders of Montenegro and Serbia as having the same low importance. He continued:

All these concern Austria [...] but Austria is not going to war with Russia. Let us therefore deal with the great things that concern England, for England is quite ready to go to war with Russia.<sup>197</sup>

Gladstone was in favour of including Russia in joint European actions and avoiding direct confrontation with St. Petersburg. For him, the emancipation of Christian states in the Balkans would be easier with Russian help and would tie into the aims of his liberalism. He supported the national programs of the Balkan nations, was known to be devoted to the Hellenic cause, and praised the Montenegrins, Bulgarians and other Balkan nations for their war against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>198</sup> As we saw earlier, he did not include the Albanians in this list.

In their second terms as Prime Ministers, both Disraeli and Gladstone dealt with the Albanian Question. Disraeli addressed it during and after the Congress of Berlin and Gladstone did so in implementing the Treaty of Berlin. The Albanians were the only Balkan people for whom Disraeli showed sympathy during the Congress and throughout the rest of his second term in office. Although the Albanian League pleaded with him to take their case to the Congress he did not answer their call, but later did bring up the need for the Great Powers to support the Albanians. They became, in his opinion, 'the main guarantors of the preservation of the Ottoman Empire in Europe.'<sup>199</sup>

Disraeli had gained considerable knowledge and experience of Albania before coming to power. He had considered Janina the capital of Albania.<sup>200</sup> His visit had a significant impact on him because he came to know the Albanians and became familiar with the Albanian-Greek problem. During and after the Congress of Berlin, his government refused to acknowledge Greek territorial pretensions over Albania. He was firm that Janina and other

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<sup>197</sup> George Earle Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. VI (New York: The Macmillan Company 1920), pp. 314-315.

<sup>198</sup> R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 565.

<sup>199</sup> Miloš Ković, *Disraeli and the Eastern Question* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 316.

<sup>200</sup> William Flavelle Moneyppenny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield*, Vol. I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910), pp. 158-164; Sultana, pp. 43-51.

southern Albanian towns should stay within Albania and should not be ceded to Greece as some diplomatic voices, headed by the French, requested at Berlin and after.

Unlike Disraeli, Gladstone did not show much interest in Albania before he came to power, though he recognised the authority of the Albanian League. In his election campaign of 1880 he spoke at the Music Hall in Edinburgh about the Porte's inability to hold territories in Europe. 'Albania is possessed by a League' he told his supporters.<sup>201</sup> However, in his second term as Prime Minister (1880-1885), Gladstone seemed to have more interest in this matter. Disraeli favoured a cautious relationship with the Albanians in order to maintain stability in that part of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, the British government under Disraeli, and even less under Gladstone, had no strategy or doctrine for an official position toward the Albanians and their national program. Albanian interests were examined only when the interests of other nations in the Balkans were considered.<sup>202</sup>

Great disagreements between Conservatives and Liberals over the Eastern Question, and consequently the Albanian Question, came to the surface when, in 1877, Disraeli appointed Henry Layard as ambassador to Constantinople. Gladstone and his Liberals expressed fierce disagreement to Layard's posting to Constantinople, 'fearing that he will bring another Crimean War.'<sup>203</sup>

The Liberals continuously accused Layard of being a Turcophile. However, during his service in Constantinople Layard, who disliked Gladstone, managed to establish a good relationship with Sultan Abdul Hamid II and exercised some influence over him. He became familiar with the Albanian Question and on several occasions raised the importance of this question for Britain and other European Powers. Some of the Liberals, including Dilke, Lord Goschen and Lord Fitzmaurice, were convinced that Disraeli was showing too much interest in the Albanian Question while in opposition, but changed their mind when they came to power. As seen above, they realised that the Albanian Question required proper attention and engaged themselves seriously in solving this problem.

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<sup>201</sup> D. M. Kesley, *Life and Public Services of Hon, W M. E. Gladstone* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1898), p. 486.

<sup>202</sup> Noel Malcolm, 'Diplomacia Britanike dhe Lidhja e Prizrenit 1878-1880' in *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit dhe Vendi i Saj në Histori* ed., Jusuf Bajraktari (Universiteti i Prishtinës, 2008), pp. 41-55.

<sup>203</sup> Henry Layard, *Memoirs*, Add. 38,934, Section I.

## Difficulties in implementing the Treaty: The border disputes with Montenegro and Greece

A month after the Congress of Berlin, the Porte, under pressure from the European Powers, decided to prepare the cession of territories. The Treaty of Berlin angered the leaders of the Albanian League. When the Porte took steps to implement the Treaty, the relationship of the League with the Porte worsened quickly.<sup>204</sup>

The Porte sent Mehmet Ali Pasha to northern Albania to persuade the Albanians to accept the Treaty. As mentioned earlier, he was well-known among the Albanians and was deeply unpopular.<sup>205</sup> The Sultan thought that Mehmet Ali Pasha was the best man for the job since he was an Ottoman plenipotentiary at Berlin and knew the region. On 19 August 1878 the Pasha told Layard that he was leaving for Albania, where he was being sent as a Commissioner to execute the Treaty in relation to the territorial cessions to Montenegro and Serbia, 'and reconcile the Albanians to them.'<sup>206</sup>

Mehmet Ali Pasha arrived in Prizren on 25 August 1878. The next day, in a meeting with the leaders of the League, the Pasha told them to submit to the will of the Powers and obey the Treaty. The reception he received was very hostile. When he tried to read the Sultan's *firman* (imperial decree) about the Treaty, he was shouted down.<sup>207</sup> Then he gave the League 24 hours to think about his proposal and come up with a positive reply. No one attended the next meeting the Pasha had called. News spread that the Pasha, after the delivery of Gucia and Plava to Montenegro, would go on to disband the League in Prizren and its branch in Shkodra. That day his telegrapher was killed, as he was suspected of secret communications with the Porte.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Skënder Anamali and Kristaq Prifti, eds., *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar, Vol. II* (Tirana: Botimet Toena, 2002), pp. 166-168.

<sup>205</sup> William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire 1801 – 1913* (Cambridge University Press, 1913), pp. 403-404.

<sup>206</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 19 August 1878, NA, FO, 424/73, Nr. 486.

<sup>207</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 222.

<sup>208</sup> Anamali and Prifti, p. 169.



Mehmet Ali Pasha left Prizren and continued toward Plava and Gucia, but stopped in Gjakova to spend the night of 1 September 1878 as a guest of Abdullah Pasha Dreni, the governor of Gjakova and a member of the League. The next morning, they found themselves surrounded by a large crowd of Albanians, believed to have been led by Ali Pasha Gucia, who directed the armed Albanians along the border of Montenegro and refused to surrender Plava and Gucia. They called on Abdullah Pasha to hand over Mehmet Ali Pasha. He refused, telling the besiegers that it was against traditional Albanian law to hand over friends and guests. Shooting began and lasted four days. Finally, Mehmet Ali Pasha, Abdullah Pasha Dreni, their guards, and a unit of Ottoman soldiers, were all killed.<sup>209</sup>

This event terrified the Porte. The Powers realised that implementing the Treaty would not be easy. Cooperation between the League and the Porte ended and the will of the Albanians to resist any cession of territory grew. The episode also brought the Albanian Question to the attention of European governments and public opinion.<sup>210</sup> The Albanian League, through Abdyl Frashëri, used this situation to put forward those demands previously adopted by the southern branch of the League in Janina.<sup>211</sup>

The incident in Gjakova halted all proceedings of the Commission about the border of Montenegro. The British Consul in Shkodra, Kirby Green, advised the Foreign Office to postpone any activity of this nature. The delimitation, he said, would be used by the League to further confront the Ottoman authorities and to assume resistance throughout Albania. The assassination of Mehmet Ali Pasha created more difficulties than were ever anticipated in deciding on the handover of Plava and Gucia. Ali Pasha Gucia, in command of 30,000 armed Albanians, was waiting for a signal to enter Montenegro. Albanian soldiers and other personnel were deserting the Ottomans *en masse* to join the Albanian force. The League had passed death sentences on some of its members who had refused to break with the Ottoman authorities.<sup>212</sup> Under these circumstances the delimitation of the frontier by the European Commission had to be stopped. The Porte was not willing to proceed with Treaty

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> The News of the Week, The Spectator <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/14th-september-1878/1/news-of-the-week>> [accessed 6 January 2017].

<sup>211</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 223 - These demands were: The four Albanian *vilayets* to be included in a single unit, with elected members to a single Assembly, the appointment of Albanian speaking functionaries in the state administration, Albanian language schools, and elected local councils of both Muslim and Christian faith.

<sup>212</sup> Green to Salisbury, 9 September 1878, NA, FO, 424/74, Nr. 400.

arrangements until an alternative solution for the Albanians was found. As Green had suggested, the Porte was having difficulties sending fresh and sufficient numbers of troops to Albania.<sup>213</sup>

Keeping Plava and Gucia became a danger for the Porte. Giving these places to Montenegro was not a solution either. The armed forces of the League created a conflict between the Albanians and Montenegro. On the other side, the League brought the Porte into difficulties with the Powers and Albanians. It became obvious that the rectification of borders could not happen in the near future.<sup>214</sup>

The League was established quickly in the south, led by the most powerful and wealthiest Muslim families in Epirus. By the beginning of 1879, Albanian notables assembled in Preveza, coming from Epirus and the rest of Albania to monitor changes in the border. They declared openly that they were determined to resist by force any annexation of part of Epirus by Greece and were prepared to put 40,000 men under arms. It was obvious that they had 'plenty of money, men, arms and ammunition to carry a long war.'<sup>215</sup>

This situation worried Greece. The Powers, including the British, could only observe and think of alternatives. The national ambitions of the League worried the Porte, although the Porte was pleased at this delay in the cession of territory since the negotiations between the Ottomans and the Greeks were not moving forward. The League caused serious problems and 'succeeded in defeating the attempt of Europe' to detach areas in the south and north.<sup>216</sup> The Berlin Treaty, in many ways, was dead.

The Foreign Minister of France, William Waddington, who was also the French plenipotentiary at the Congress of Berlin, looked for a way out of this difficult situation. He favoured actions benefiting the Greek Government and wanted to reach an understanding with the British on the Greek question. He told the British ambassador in Paris, Lord Lyons, that France had received offers from the Russian and the German governments to send warships to the Mediterranean to execute the part of the Treaty concerning Greece.<sup>217</sup> However, he refused both offers because he preferred this matter be dealt with by France

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<sup>213</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 23 September 1878, NA, FO, 424/75, Nr. 81.

<sup>214</sup> Mémoire, le 18 décembre 1879, HR. SFR (3) 270/ 1 / 70.

<sup>215</sup> Sebright to Salisbury, 25 January 1879, NA, FO, 424/80, Nr. 7 & Enclosure 1.

<sup>216</sup> Medlicott, *Congress of Berlin*, p. 135.

<sup>217</sup> Lyons to Salisbury, 24 February 1879, NA, FO, 424/80, Nr. 516.

and Britain. Waddington insisted that Thessaly and Epirus should be considered as a source of strength for Greece but Disraeli's government refused these proposed annexations because it would have weakened the Porte and angered the Albanians. Yet the British were in favour of a moderate extension of the Greek border, though not including Janina and the surrounding region, as Waddington had advocated.

The Ottoman government, as an answer to this situation, issued a memorandum in which they refused the French proposal of separating Epirus from Albania. The Porte regarded that the 'Tosques' (Albanians of the south) would be severely damaged because they would be denied the natural link with the port of Preveza in the Adriatic. The Porte insisted that Epirus was inhabited by 'Tosques' from the Valley of Callamas to the north with Vlora as the centre.<sup>218</sup>

Almost one year after the Congress, negotiations over the Greek borders were going nowhere. The Liberals continued to criticise the Conservative government for their unfavourable attitude towards Greece. The Liberals never ceased to remind Disraeli that ministers of England had always promoted the extension of Greece as a strategy for a 'solution of the Eastern Question in accordance with the real interests of England.'<sup>219</sup>

Disraeli believed that the Greeks were a danger but the Albanians, who were neglected, were a greater danger. Disraeli had mainly disregarded Waddington's plans but on some occasions let him know that it was the Albanians and the Porte he was worried about, rather than the Greeks. Disraeli had other plans and was trying to win the support of Bismarck. Concerned about the poor fulfilment of the Treaty, on 13 July 1879 he wrote to Bismarck:

The Janina question is not one of Turkish *amour propre*, at which we should all laugh. It involves an Albanian war, which would probably be long and devastating, and precipitate results which it is the interest of Germany and England to postpone.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Mémoire, le 4 décembre 1879, HR. SFR (3) 270 /1/ 53.

<sup>219</sup> HC Debate, 17 April 1879 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1879/apr/17/treaty-of-berlin-protocol-13-greece-and>> [accessed 9 May 2014].

<sup>220</sup> Buckle, p. 341.

The call from Gladstone for Disraeli to implement the Treaty of Berlin was strong. He criticised the government for allowing France to champion the case of the 'Hellenic races.' He held the view that the British government should co-operate with France and accept Waddington's proposal because this was 'the strong and general feeling of the British nation.'<sup>221</sup>

While Waddington kept pressuring the British Conservative government on Janina, Salisbury instructed Lyons to tell Waddington that France did not appear as a friend of Greece and was endangering the Porte. Salisbury maintained that Greece, with its embarrassing finances and bad government, would not be able to assimilate the ceded territory and would be 'exposed to the contingency of an Albanian war and retard her development by a half century.'<sup>222</sup>

Because of the difficulties the League had created, the Ottomans approached Layard in September 1878 to ask if London would mediate the exchange of Plava, Gucia and Vranje for other territories containing Slav populations. The Ottomans suggested that a territory with the same size could be given to Montenegro on the border with Herzegovina. The Ottomans were keen for an exchange as they were convinced that the Albanians would not surrender any territory without a fight.<sup>223</sup> However, the idea of territorial exchange led nowhere because Austria-Hungary did not agree to give up any territory under its administration.

The Porte searched for alternative solutions and Italy was asked to mediate. At the beginning of 1879, Count Corti came up with a proposal for territorial exchange. As Plava and Gucia were inhabited by Muslim Albanians, Corti thought it would be easy to give Montenegro Kuçi Kraina, Hoti and Gruda, which were inhabited by Catholic Albanians. Although Montenegro indicated readiness to accept this proposal, Albanian Catholics refused inclusion in Montenegro. Salisbury told Layard to officially support the arrangement in Constantinople but not to push it if Austria-Hungary expressed strong

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<sup>221</sup> HC Debate, 17 April 1879 <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1879/apr/17/treaty-of-berlin-protocol-13-greece-and>> [accessed 9 May 2014].

<sup>222</sup> Salisbury to Lyons, 2 June 1879, NA, FO, 424/ 84, Nr. 26.

<sup>223</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 23 September 1878, NA, FO, 424/75, Nr. 81.

objections to it.<sup>224</sup> The proposal further united the Albanian Catholics with the Albanian Muslims and Albanian armed units along the border became a real threat.

The Great Powers shifted position and decided to give Montenegro the coastal town of Ulqin and its surroundings, which were also predominantly Albanian but Muslim in religion. During the spring of the same year, the Ottoman army began to withdraw from other positions to allow the Montenegrin occupation as ordered by the Treaty. But many of these positions, instead of being held by Montenegrins, were in fact occupied by the forces of the League. Clashes between the Montenegrins and the Albanian League were frequent yet neither side was winning, thus creating a problem for the Powers and the Porte. The Albanian League had not given up Plava and Gucia and when the Montenegrin army tried to occupy the area by force at the end of 1879 and the beginning of 1880 it was repulsed by the League.

#### The Change in British Foreign Policy and the Conference of Berlin

The British election of May 1880 brought the Liberals to power with Gladstone as Prime Minister. Earl Granville became Foreign Secretary with Charles Dilke as his deputy. Another immediate change was that of the ambassador to Constantinople. Ambassador Layard, whom the Liberals disliked so intensely, was replaced by Joachim Goschen. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice was appointed Commissioner at Constantinople with the duty to oversee the reorganisation and reforms of the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire as foreseen by the Treaty of Berlin.

British foreign policy and its position towards the Eastern Question changed. The Porte, especially the Albanians who were aware of Gladstone's liberalism, were most concerned. Yet surprisingly the Liberals became more active than the Conservatives had been previously in trying to find a solution to the Albanian Question. Through Goschen, Gladstone was showing the Porte that his government was determined to insist, in concert with the other Powers, that the time had come to fulfil the obligations of the Treaty of

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<sup>224</sup> Medicott, *Congress of Berlin*, p. 353.

Berlin. Goschen's main duty was to convince the Sultan that the British would not tolerate further delays regarding the border demarcation of Montenegro and Greece.<sup>225</sup>

The new government gave fresh impetus to the Treaty negotiations. As a result of this new British policy, the Powers became more active and pressure on the Porte and on Albanians was intensified. Gladstone was now in a position to push the Powers to speed up preparations for another peace conference and bring about an end to the border problems in the Balkans. In July 1880 the Great Powers gathered in Berlin once again to solve the problem of the Greek and Montenegrin borders. As before, the Albanian Question was not treated as a separate issue. Almost the entire part of Thessaly and a great part of Epirus were assigned to Greece, though the Montenegrin border was not discussed in great detail.<sup>226</sup> The Powers considered the matter closed because Montenegro was to get Hoti and Gruda, or the town of Ulqin with its surrounding district. The British wanted to deal with the Albanian matter as they still, even under Gladstone, considered the Albanians important for the existence of the Ottoman Empire. However, they were not supported by the other Powers, with Russia and France strongly rejecting any talks about Albania, and Austria-Hungary and Germany taking neutral positions.<sup>227</sup>

The Albanian League, again, did not accept the decisions of the Conference. In September it became known that Ulqin would be given to Montenegro and that the British, leading a naval blockade, would assist in the cession and complete the rectification of the border. The allied fleet, which had gathered in Dubrovnik, under the British flag, was ready to sail south and appear off Ulqin in September 1880. The appearance of the fleet was not only to symbolise the handover but a threat addressed to the Porte and the League, as well as an act of support for the Montenegrins. No result of this kind was produced. The Ottoman commander, Riza Pasha, who was sent to Shkodra with the task of surrendering Ulqin, did not obey the order. It is likely he abstained due to Albanian pressure, but perhaps more likely as a result of the delaying tactics applied by the Porte. On 4 October 1880 Gladstone proposed to the Powers to organise a naval blockade of the Ottoman port of Smyrna and to occupy the customs office there. Austria-Hungary did not agree to such a risky step and the

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<sup>225</sup> Granville to Goschen, 18 May 1880, NA, FO, 78/3074, Nr. 1.

<sup>226</sup> See Appendix 2 (Map), May 1880, NA, FO, 925/3126.

<sup>227</sup> Anamali and Prifti p. 195.

plan was set aside when other Powers also hesitated.<sup>228</sup> The idea of a naval blockade on Smyrna, although it did not happen, frightened the Sultan who saw it as a potential humiliation.

As seen earlier, Gladstone cherished a romantic affection for Montenegro. He managed to convince the Powers to act in concert to pressurise the Porte to hand over Ulqin and went as far as threatening the Porte with a blockade of Smyrna. The Powers had viewed this insistence unfavourably and Gladstone was left alone to deal with the Porte. Bismarck said that 'Dulcigno [Ulqin] was madness and Gladstone was a crazy professor.'<sup>229</sup> Even the Queen seemed to have agreed with Bismarck and continued to remind Gladstone that Disraeli's policy toward the Ottoman Empire should not be abandoned, nor would she give her consent to a war with the Porte, whom she regarded as an old ally. Yet Gladstone believed that it would not be good if the Porte 'befools Europe at Dulcigno [Ulqin]'.<sup>230</sup>

When ships of other Powers left the British detachment alone in the Adriatic, the Sultan believed that the British would not act alone and refused to yield. Yet the ships were ready for departure the moment they received the signal. In October, Goschen presented an ultimatum to the Sultan in Constantinople who gave in to the demands.<sup>231</sup> Gladstone had followed developments in Ulqin closely and with anxiety. One morning, Granville showed him a deciphered telegram. The Sultan had agreed to give up Ulqin. Gladstone was astonished but his success did not impress the Powers, with Bismarck regarding this act as Gladstone's policy of 'promoting Russian interest in the East and neglecting the English'.<sup>232</sup>

As a result of Gladstone's threat, the Porte sent more troops to Albania to convince the Albanians to give up Ulqin. On 22 November 1880 Dervish Pasha, Marshall of the Ottoman Army who replaced Rizah Pasha, the *vali* of Shkodra, in command of 10,000 regular troops, marched towards Ulqin. The following day the Ottoman troops, consisting of 8 battalions, clashed with the Albanians. A few hours fighting left many casualties on both sides. The armed units of the League were forced to withdraw and the Ottomans, with heavy artillery, entered Ulqin on 23 November. The town was handed over to the Montenegrins on 27

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<sup>228</sup> Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy* (London: Frank Cass, 1935), pp. 141-142.

<sup>229</sup> Erich Eyck and Bernard Miall, *Gladstone* (London: Routledge, 1966), p. 290.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> Pears, p. 84.

<sup>232</sup> Eyck and Miall, p. 291.

November and the border dispute was over. Finally, on 24 May 1881 the Conference of Ambassadors in Constantinople drew the demarcation line with Greece, giving the greatest part of Thessaly to Greece as well as part of Epirus, along with the entire region of Arta, which surrendered on 6 July 1881. Janina was not included. Greece got considerably less territory than it and its friends had asked for.<sup>233</sup> For the League, this was a loss the Albanians could live with.

Throughout 1880 the League was running the territory of modern day Kosovo, north Albania and northwest Macedonia, as a *de facto* government. In February Abdyl Frashëri told the Central Committee of the League in Prizren that the Porte would do nothing about Albania and would give part of their territory to Montenegro and Greece. The League started forming an army of 12,000 fighters. 'Let us be Albanians and make one Albania,' said Frashëri in a meeting of the League.<sup>234</sup> A well-known British artist and illustrator, Richard Caton Woodville, registered the same spirit of independence in Shkodra. Woodville and his companions were allowed to attend a secret meeting of the Albanian League because they were British. Woodville characterised the meeting of the Albanian leaders of the League as resembling any European senate of that time. In an anti-Ottoman atmosphere, he drew a sketch and registered a speech of one of the leaders:

What want we with matters in the land of Arbenii [Albania]? Are we babes, that we cannot go alone? What does the Sultanate for us? Does it protect our lives? No. Does it roof our houses? No. Does it feed our starving? No. Shall we be silent and eat dirt? [...] I will tell you. What is the will of our masters? That we give it up to the Slavs of Kara Dagh [Montenegro]? For what? Because the Sultanet wills it? Because the Cuvend [Assembly] of Berlin wills it? Because the Ruski [Russia] wills it? [...] Let us speak – but with steel and lead, with yataghan [sword] and pouska [gun].<sup>235</sup>

The activities of the League were noted throughout that year by the British press, which had started to pay considerable attention to the Albanian Question. An article published in the *Manchester Guardian* criticised the British government for not addressing the Albanian

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<sup>233</sup> Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone*, p. 519.

<sup>234</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 227.

<sup>235</sup> 'Sketches in Albania, A Meeting of the Albanian League', *The Illustrated London News*, 10 April 1880, p. 346.



Question.<sup>236</sup> The League's success, which was evident by August 1880, had created excitement among some Albanian leaders leading them to think of independence. The *Manchester Guardian* also reported, with some exaggeration, that the League had declared independence and established full control over most parts of Albania and Macedonia.<sup>237</sup>

However, after the loss of Ulqin, a military clash between the League and the Porte was inevitable. Fearing that the League would move toward independence, in March 1881 the Porte sent 20,000 troops to Skopje. Dervish Pasha moved 10,000 troops and heavy artillery to Kosovo and confronted 5,000 armed men of the League in Shtime. The Ottomans won the battle but fighting continued elsewhere. In May the Ottoman army occupied all of Kosovo and the hunt began for the leaders of the Albanian League. Abdyl Frashëri was sentenced to death along with many other leaders, though Frashëri's punishment was commuted to life imprisonment and he was later pardoned. More than 4,000 people were arrested and hundreds were exiled.<sup>238</sup>

This was the end of the Albanian League. Although it had prevented the annexation of much of the territory to Greece, Montenegro and Serbia, in general the League must be seen as a failure since it did not succeed in fulfilling its objective to unite the Albanians under one single *vilayet* or other autonomous administrative unit.<sup>239</sup> With this, the British believed that Albania was pacified and the future of the Ottoman Empire, and indeed peace in Europe, were secured.

#### Key Actors and Their Stance Regarding British Policy

Although Disraeli and Gladstone had made up their mind and already decided on their position regarding the Albanian case, the decision making process in London relied on information from the ground. This communication circulated in a triangle between London, Constantinople and Shkodra. From time to time, according to the situation and

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<sup>236</sup> 'The Albanian Question', *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 May 1880, pg. 7 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/478840433/pageview/FA92C44923D64587PQ/1?accountid=14664>> [accessed 11 April 2017].

<sup>237</sup> 'The Declaration of Albanian Independence', *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1880, p. 5 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/478835786?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 15 April 2017].

<sup>238</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 227.

<sup>239</sup> Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010) p. VII.

circumstances, other British diplomats and consular officials from neighbouring countries of Albania and *ad hoc* military missions or envoys were included in the process.

London, the centre of the process, was occasionally influenced by facts on the ground and, to a lesser degree, by public opinion and political life at home. The level of pressure on the political actors that were involved in the decision making process remained low. However, both British public opinion and Liberal policy-makers felt a close connection to and compassion for the Ottoman Christians and, in this regard, Gladstone had their full support. Those who were concerned with this issue always found ways to address their concerns on a domestic and international level.<sup>240</sup> Yet they showed little interest in the Albanian Question and, as a result, the government was never seriously pressurised on this matter. The Albanian Question never occupied the stage as the Greek, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Montenegrin and Serbian national questions did. Primarily, British public opinion talked about the position of Christians in the Balkans and reacted only if the Albanians were Christian.<sup>241</sup>

The British public and decision makers in Westminster, in general, viewed the Albanians as Ottomans or Muslim, and when their question was discussed, they were identified as “Arnauts” serving with the Ottoman armies that executed repressive measures against the Christians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>242</sup>

In the British Parliament the situation was not much different. As seen above, there were only a few occasions when the members discussed the matter in favour of the Albanians. Under these circumstances the Foreign Office and Downing Street did not feel pressurised when they dealt with any matter relating to Albania in foreign affairs.

However, various reports sent by the ambassadors Layard, Goschen and Lord Fitzmaurice from Constantinople, did have some impact in London. They understood the peculiar situation of the Albanians and asked their superiors in London to find a proper solution. On some occasions they exercised considerable influence. For example, it is likely that it was Fitzmaurice and Goschen who convinced Gladstone that part of Epirus, with Janina as a

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<sup>240</sup> Rodogno, pp. 12-15.

<sup>241</sup> George Carslake Thompson, *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield 1875 - 1880, Vol. II*, (London: Macmillan, 1886), p. 14.

<sup>242</sup> ‘Topics of the Day, the Murder of Mehemet Ali’, *The Spectator* <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/14th-september-1878/4/topics-of-the-day>> [accessed 5 April 2014].

centre, was not to be given to Greece. To a certain degree, this was the position held by Disraeli who already understood the situation but, even taking into account this prior knowledge, Layard's reports helped him in particular situations when dealing with the Powers. By 1881 Goschen's and Fitzmaurice's initiative, which called for creating an autonomous or independent Albanian state, faded away. The reason for abandoning such an initiative was not known for a long time and it wasn't until decades later that Edith Durham, whom we shall discuss later, revealed the reason. In a lecture that Durham gave in February 1941 at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, she told the audience that the Albanians were treated with prejudice because of their religion.<sup>243</sup>

Lord Fitzmaurice was a Liberal but on the subject of Albania he did not share the views of Gladstone and most members of his party. Instead, he made it known that it was religious biases which prevented the Albanian Question, from receiving the sympathy of the British public. He saw that, as a consequence, the British public did not pressurise the government to adopt policies in favour of the Albanians.

The situation was different with the British diplomatic and consular representatives on the ground, in Albanian territory. Kirby Green in Shkodra and St. John in Prizren, because of their lower status, had less impact in London. They showed no sympathy for Albanians and their cause. In their reports they often created confusion by calling the Albanians Arnauts, Muslims or even Turks.

Kirby Green was under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian consul, Lipich, who was of Slav origin and favoured the Montenegrins and Serbs. Albanians were aware of this fact and held him in no high regard. It was obvious that Green did not like the Albanians and their warlike attitude. His duty was to convince them to give up their ideas of autonomy or independence, discourage them from fighting the Porte and the Montenegrins and obey decisions and orders from the Great Powers. When the Albanian League was formed he considered it an exclusively Muslim and fanatical organisation and did not change his mind even after Albanian Catholics began to join it in large numbers. When a British journalist asked him about the political centre and the chief characteristics of the League, he answered:

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<sup>243</sup> Edith Durham, *Afternoon Lecture*, MS 405/203.

Priserin [Prizren], let me tell you, the headquarter of the Albanian League, an organization of the most fanatical Mussulmen of the country, whose object is to resist the Austrian advance, and the Montenegrin claims, by force of arms.<sup>244</sup>

Kirby Green was also convinced that the League was an Ottoman creation and changed his mind only when the Albanians opposed the Porte militarily. The British diplomats in Constantinople were not always happy with the work of Green in Albania and Montenegro. On 18 April 1880 Count Corti told Layard that he would complain to the British government about Kirby Green, who he believed had prevented successful negotiation regarding the border settlement with unnecessary interference. In the words of Layard, 'Green had made up his mind from the first that the exchange of territory could not take place, and does not seem to have done anything to promote it.'<sup>245</sup>

Green convinced London to accept his plan for the annexation of Ulqin, known as the Dulcigno Arrangement, and was supported by his Austro–Hungarian colleague, Lipich. Yet Green did not see the Albanians as organising as a nation and never agreed that their actions were the result of nationalism. Green had expressed his thoughts on this matter on several occasions. During the settlement of the Ulqin Question, Dervish Pasha had circulated a report in Shkodra saying that Green was behind the troubles the Albanians caused. At that time Green was visiting Montenegro, and as a consequence, the Pasha asked the Porte to object to his return to his post in Shkodra. Green, worried about his position and reputation, wrote to Earl Granville to explain himself:

I have so frequently had the honour to report to your Lordship on the birth and progress of the Albanian League, and foreshadowed the present outcome, that I will merely here state categorically that Hussein and Nazif Pashas, Turkish Valis, and not foreigners, formed the League out of clerks and Notables in Ottoman employ, who were quite beyond the influence of strangers.<sup>246</sup>

Goschen read Green's report and could not let it go unanswered. He was strongly determined to discredit Green's report and the eventual influence he may have had on this

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<sup>244</sup> Fredrik Edward Knight, *Albania: A Narrative of Recent Travel*, (London: Simpson Low & Rivington, 1880), p. 115.

<sup>245</sup> Layard to Salisbury, 18 April 1880, NA, FO 424/97, Nr. 339.

<sup>246</sup> Green to Granville, 3 May 1881, NA, FO, 424/136, Nr. 24.

matter in the Foreign Office and the wider British Government. Therefore, Goschen swiftly advised the Foreign Secretary:

I am bound to state that I have not shared the opinions he [Green] has constantly put forward with reference to the Albanian movement. He has, in my judgement, failed to recognise the strong national tendencies which have been developed, and has been at too much pains to show that the League was due to no national sentiment whatever, but simply to Palace machinations. While it is certain that the Palace clique at Constantinople has at times played a very dangerous game as regards the Albanian League, I have, from the first, been under the impression that a feeling of Albanian nationality existed, and must be taken into consideration as a powerful factor in the present crisis, differing from the view of Mr. Kirby Green, that if the word were only given from Constantinople all would be well.<sup>247</sup>

St. John, in his dispatches from Prizren, often warned London that the Albanian League was about to massacre the Christian population. It was true that there were cases when Christians were mistreated by desperate Albanian refugees and angry *bashi-bazouks*. Yet the massacres predicted by St. John never took place and he never informed London that the plan of the League was to protect the Christian population. He did not recognise the League or its leaders, whom he called tribal chieftains. He also sent incorrect information about the number of Albanian villages bordering Montenegro and the religion of their inhabitants.<sup>248</sup>

At the end of July 1880, Fitzmaurice complained to London about St. John, who was sending contradictory reports and completely disregarding the Albanians in Kosovo. In his reports St. John suggested that Kosovo was a Serb region and inhabited predominantly by Serbs. He called Kosovo 'Stara Srbia' (Old Serbia), a term used for Kosovo by Serbian nationalists in the nineteenth century.<sup>249</sup> Contents of his reports were contrary to all other reports available to British diplomats and those published in the European press. In fact, his

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<sup>247</sup> Goschen to Granville, 14 May 1881, NA, FO, 424/136, Nr. 28.

<sup>248</sup> St. John to Salisbury, 12 March 1880, NA, FO, 424/97, Nr. 3.

<sup>249</sup> Fitzmaurice to Granville, 22 July 1880, NA, FO, 424/101, Nr. 28.

reports were not much different from those of Yastrebov, the Russian Consul in Prizren, under whose influence St. John had fallen.

In addition to the diplomatic representatives in the region, Lieutenant Ross of Bladensburg assessed the border situation of Albania with Serbia, Montenegro and Greece between 1878–and 1881. Working on the ground, he became an expert on Albania and his reports were widely read by British diplomats and members of the government. He also made several reports on the political situation in Albania and the region. He spent several weeks in Kosovo and after lengthy research produced a serious report on the Albanian League for government use.<sup>250</sup>

The British government, on several occasions, commissioned Captain Sale<sup>251</sup> to produce similar reports. He also prepared a report on how to proceed against the Albanians if they continued with armed resistance and did not obey the Treaty, proposing punitive measures. Goschen and Fitzmaurice were upset with this ruthless plan proposed by Captain Sale, who suggested destroying Albanian villages as a penalty for disobedience against the orders of the Powers. Furthermore, he proposed that a British agent should be employed to influence the Albanians, spread fear among them and let them know that, by rejecting the will of the Powers, they would face not only political but private consequences. This was a setback for Goschen and Fitzmaurice. Goschen believed that Albanians, who were losing their territories, should not be penalised. He advised the government never to adopt such an attitude towards the Albanians, who were acting according to the principle of nationality, similarly to other nations.<sup>252</sup>

There were also personalities from the non-governmental sector who influenced British policy on the Eastern Question. These included travel writers, journalists, anthropologists, and archaeologists such as David Urquhart and Arthur Evans (1851–1941). Both contributed to the fierce debate on the Eastern Question. As we saw earlier Urquhart, with his unreserved support for the Ottoman Empire and degree of support for Albania helped the political line of the Conservatives led by Disraeli, while Evans took the side of the Liberals and Gladstone. Arthur Evans was an archaeologist and journalist who became

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<sup>250</sup> Bladensburg to Salisbury, 30 December 1878, NA, FO, 424/78, Nr. 200.

<sup>251</sup> Captain Sale was the British member of the European Commission for Delimitation of Montenegrin Border.

<sup>252</sup> Fitzmaurice to Granville, 22 July 1880, NA, FO, 424/101, Nr. 28.

famous for unearthing the palace of Knossos in Crete. He also unearthed artefacts elsewhere in the Mediterranean, including north Albania where he discovered Illyrian coins from the second century BC. He produced at least two reports on Albania for the benefit of the Foreign Office.<sup>253</sup> Evans, with his publications as a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, inspired Gladstone and the Liberals and was considered a partisan of protecting the Christians in the Balkans. This was appreciated by Gladstone who used Evans' writings as a reference for his political speeches and as first hand evidence, to tell the public and voters how the Christians were persecuted.<sup>254</sup> Being a Slavophil, some of Evan's reports on Albania were similar to those of St. John, the British Council who served in Prizren.

Evans used Serbian terminology when explaining the names of places in Albania. Like St. John, he called Kosovo 'Stara Srbia' and proposed that Kosovo be given to Serbia after the Ottoman withdrawal. Albanian nationalists were not pleased with his reports and ideas but showed some respect for him, as some parts of his work became useful during the process of their national renaissance. Evans brought back into use *Dardania*, the old Illyrian and Roman name for Kosovo and north Macedonia. He was also appreciated because of his support for the theory that the Albanians were descendants of the Illyrians, and because he was considered to have published fair articles regarding the Albanian League.<sup>255</sup> During his visit to Albania in 1878 he changed his mind. He was impressed with the Albanian League and viewed the Albanians with admiration. In his *Illyrian Letters*, published in 1878, Evans wrote about his impressions while among Albanians:

Everything reminds me that I am not among either a Slavic or a Turkish people. These are truly fellows – patriots of Skanderbeg and of Ali of Yanina – Albanians, "Shiptarë", heirs as strong as rock, a most warlike race and altogether undefeated! [...] The Albanian is by nature quick, energetic, sceptical, always in motion, impatient with supervision. For him, above everything else is freedom.<sup>256</sup>

Evans' works on Albania were published during and after 1878 when it was too late to influence the British government, the public or the decision making process of the Powers

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<sup>253</sup> NA, FO, 424/136, Nr. 141 - Report: Some observations on the present state of Dardania, or Turkish Serbia (including the Vilayet of Kossova and part of the Vilayet of Monastir), Parts I & II.

<sup>254</sup> Arthur Evans, *Ancient Illyria - An Archaeological Exploration* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. i - xvii.

<sup>255</sup> See compiled articles in: Destani and Tomes, *Arthur Evans, Albanian Letters*.

<sup>256</sup> As cited in: Anna Mazurkiewicz, ed., *East Central Europe in Exile, Vol. 1* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 11.

in the Congress of Berlin. Before he became interested in the Albanian question he was very active in Croatia and Bosnia in supporting the Christian Slavs against Austria-Hungary. In Dubrovnik he was once arrested and accused of being Gladstone's spy. Because of his anti-Austro-Hungarian activity he helped Gladstone to maintain anti-Austro-Hungarian feelings in Britain. When the Liberals came to power in 1880, Gladstone considered appointing Evans as consul in Dubrovnik or elsewhere in the Balkans but gave up as he could not jeopardise the relationship with Austria-Hungary.<sup>257</sup>

### Conclusion

The initial demand of the Albanians was political and cultural autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. In Prizren, where the League was formed, it was thought that within a single autonomous unit or *vilayet*, Albania would be safe.

British public opinion and policy makers felt a close connection to and compassion for the Ottoman Christians. Those who were concerned with this issue always found ways to address their concerns on a domestic and international level.<sup>258</sup> Yet they showed little interest in the Albanian Question and, as a result, the government was never seriously pressurised on this matter. The Albanian Question never occupied the stage as the Greek, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Montenegrin and Serbian national questions did. Primarily, British public opinion had adopted the Liberal view on the position of Christians in the Balkans and reacted only if the Albanians were Christian.<sup>259</sup> Since the British public and Westminster decision makers, in general, viewed the Albanians as Ottomans or Muslim, when their question was discussed, they were identified as "Arnauts" serving with the Ottoman armies that executed repressive measures against the Christians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>260</sup>

In the British Parliament the situation was not much different. There were only a few occasions when MPs discussed the matter in favour of the Albanians. Under these

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<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Rodogno, pp. 12-15.

<sup>259</sup> Thompson, p. 14.

<sup>260</sup> 'The murder of Mehmet Ali', *The Spectator*, 14 September 1878, p. 4. <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/14th-september-1878/4/topics-of-the-day>> [accessed 5 April 2014].



circumstances the Foreign Office and Downing Street did not feel pressurised when they dealt with any matter relating to Albania in foreign affairs.

Regarding the future of Albania after the Congress of Berlin, both British diplomats and Albanian leaders were on a similar track. Both saw Albania as part of the Ottoman Empire when autonomy was considered, but also considered independence or union with Greece as a solution.

Before and during the Congress, British policy makers in London underestimated the political will and capacity of the Albanians to protect their territory and identity. Britain and other Powers in Berlin applied the principle of 'strategic rectification of frontiers' and, in the case of the Albanians, showed no regard for their national aspirations or the principle of nationality.<sup>261</sup> As seen above, Salisbury told the Albanian League delegates about the principle of nationality when he met them in London.

Acting on strategic principles and ignoring the principle of nationality, Disraeli and Gladstone did not endorse the advice of Layard, Goschen, Fitzmaurice and Dilke for the autonomy or independence of Albania. Helping the Albanians to create an autonomous or independent state meant ending the Ottoman presence in Europe and the creation of a new balance between the Powers, meaning Russia could have advanced towards the lands and seas of south-east Europe.

Had the activities of the League resulted in a military victory against the Porte, the situation might have been different. Yet the fact that neither the Liberal nor Conservative British governments agreed to give Janina to Greece, despite the failure of the League, showed that the British not only recognised the Albanian nationality but also gave hope to the Albanians that their country would be recognised as an autonomous or independent state at a later stage.

Regardless of the position of the British and other Powers, for a short while the League acted as a *de facto* government of a nation. It even managed to collect taxes, expelled Ottoman officials from the administration and replaced them with local Albanians. On

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<sup>261</sup> Munro, *The Berlin Congress*, p. 30. - The British Parliament wanted a pledge from the Government to respect the principle of nationality in the Balkan settlement during the Congress of Berlin but the Government refused to make such an engagement.

many occasions the League abrogated the Ottoman law and replaced it with the *Kanun* (Albanian traditional law). It organised an army and successfully protected the border with Montenegro.

## Chapter III

### The Post-Berlin Period: British Liberalism and the Balkans

*The Balkans were, like Foucault's societal others, on the very ground of Europe, but this was a Europe gone horribly wrong.* – Andrew Hammond.<sup>262</sup>

#### Introduction

This chapter will analyse British foreign policy towards Albania in the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin and argue that the British government supported the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. By taking such a stance, the British government could not support Albanian actions against the Ottoman Empire.

This chapter will analyse the second phase of the image-building process surrounding the Balkans and Albania, which covers the beginning of the twentieth century and ends with the start of the First World War in 1914. In contrast with the first phase of the nineteenth century, when images were brought to Britain by occasional and rare travellers, in the twentieth century images were transmitted more frequently and in many forms by dedicated individuals considered experts on the history and politics of the Balkans. These experts, who were prominent personalities in Britain, believed that the situation in the Balkans and particularly in Macedonia, had gone wrong and needed help from Britain and the European Powers. Therefore, they fed the public with images and tried to influence British policy by pushing forward their own perceptions and views.

Below we shall discuss the way that these experts established connections with the public and the manner in which they led discussions in order to exercise influence over politicians and the press. It will be argued that these expert writers played a special role in the image-building process, contributed to educating the public on Balkan matters and influenced the

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<sup>262</sup> Andrew Hammond, *The Debated Lands: British and American Representations of the Balkans* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 10.

decision making process in British politics. The Balkan Committee, an organisation established and dominated by Liberals, conveyed its ideas and plans through these experts. The Albanian Question, as part of the Macedonian problem, will take a prominent place and will be analysed through the activities of the Balkan Committee.

It will also be argued that the Balkan Committee campaigned for a Gladstonian solution to the Macedonian problem and ignored the Albanian Question. The committee aimed to liberate the Christians from Ottoman rule but gave little consideration to other nationalities or ethnic groups. For this reason, the Albanian Question in Macedonia did not receive sufficient attention from committee members, the British government or the Powers. Therefore, the activities of the committee proved ineffectual and failed to fulfil its aim of securing autonomy and a peaceful future for Macedonia.

However, the Balkan Committee did try to exercise influence over the British government regarding international intervention in Macedonia. These international initiatives, which as we shall see, started in 1903 with the Mürzsteg Agreement, tried to introduce reforms in Macedonia. This was to be done mainly by reforming the gendarmerie, but ended unsuccessfully in 1908 when the Powers showed no readiness for deeper involvement due to the rivalry they faced in establishing their spheres of interest. International involvement was also stopped because the British government and other Powers believed that the Young Turk Revolution would bring about democratic change which would in turn solve the Macedonian Question.

The positive image of Serbia, which had been built by some travel writers in parallel with the negative image of Albania during the nineteenth century, suffered seriously from bad publicity between 1903 and 1908. Yet, after 1908, due to geostrategic reasons, Serbia was poised to become the ally of Britain in the Balkans. At this stage many writers, Gladstonians among them, hurried to help the government create a good image of Serbia.

This subject is important for the thesis because it shows the way in which the image of Albania was created in Britain in the early twentieth century and the way the British public and government policy was influenced on the Macedonian Question.

## British Foreign Policy and the Albanian Question 1883 – 1903

Not long after the Congress of Berlin, in the summer of 1883, the mountaineers in northern Albania organised an insurrection against the Porte. They approached the British consul in Shkodra and asked if 'there was any hope of support from the British Government.' The reply from London said:

There is only one British interest in North Albania, and that is that the perfect harmony should exist between the Sultan and his subjects – a state of things which could not be if the mountaineers fancied they could put pressure on the Turkish Government through foreign aid.<sup>263</sup>

Two years later, there was another event which attracted British attention. This time, the Albanian Question in Macedonia came to the British government's attention in a strange way. At the beginning of 1885 a certain G. W. Leybourne, who presented himself as president of the Albanian Committee, started sending letters to European leaders in order to inform them that Albanians were preparing to liberate Macedonia. In a proclamation issued on 5 June 1885, Leybourne called on Bulgarian and Macedonian personalities and organisations to join the 'Children of Skanderbeg', as he called the Albanians, to rise together against the 'Turkish Infidel' and create the Republic of Macedonia.<sup>264</sup> Austro-Hungarian diplomats called this organisation, which was based at Corfu,<sup>265</sup> the English-Albanian Committee and worried that future actions of the Committee may disturb the region and endanger their interests in the Balkans.

The Porte and the British government were particularly worried, as it was believed the troubles that would take place in Macedonia would be organised by the Albanians and led by a British subject. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry asked its ambassador in London, Musurush Pasha, to contact British Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, and find out who Leybourne was and who was sending letters and issuing proclamations from London.<sup>266</sup> The British government could not find the sender of these letters and proclamations but after a long investigation, on 6 October 1885, Lord Salisbury advised Musurush Pasha not to worry

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<sup>263</sup> Green to Granville, 11 June 1883, NA, FO, 424/129, Nr. 100.

<sup>264</sup> Arnautluk, Leybourn, L.B.A. K. 229/4, 1885; Musurush Pasha to Salisbury, HR SFR 3 – 315, 3. 5.

<sup>265</sup> Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, p. 306.

<sup>266</sup> Musurush Pasha to Salisbury, HR. SFR 3, 315, 3, 6 - 7; HR. SFR 3 – 315, 3, 7.

about Leybourne and his activities because the supposed committee had ceased to exist. However, both British and Austro-Hungarian diplomats noticed that Leybourne had worked closely with two Albanians, Prenk Gjoka and Emin Bey, both on the pay-roll of the Greek government. Gjoka and Emin Bey tried to organise an insurrection and claimed to have British support. Gjoka had even met the British consul in Shkodra, whom he told that 'the revolution in favour of the English, and also the Greeks, is ready.'<sup>267</sup> At the beginning of 1883 the pair escaped to Greece as they were wanted by the Porte as ordinary criminals. Together with Leybourne they tried to revive the Albanian League but their efforts ended without success. After this failure, Leybourne moved to Egypt, since he could not go back to England where he had left many debts and knew that he would be thrown in prison by his friends who supplied him with the money to fund his Albanian adventure. In the end, Salisbury told the Porte that in the future such a person and others like him would be 'prevented from misleading the Albanians'.<sup>268</sup>

Although Leybourn was merely an adventurer, he managed to alarm the Porte and the British government. This case showed that the Albanians and Macedonia would soon become a problem for which the British government did not have a plan and did not want its citizens to be involved in. The other interested party, Austria-Hungary, in contrast to the British, monitored the region better and knew much more about Leybourne and his travels around Albania and Macedonia, during which he portrayed himself as being close to Gladstone and other important British personalities.<sup>269</sup> The Leybourne case, although a false alarm, was a strange prelude to the Macedonian crisis.

However, it was the Bulgarians who initiated the complicated problem of Macedonia. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of creating an independent Bulgarian state, and particularly a Bulgarian Church (Exarchate), independent from the Greek Patriarchate, became a reality and brought the Macedonian Question into the view of the European Powers.<sup>270</sup> The internal ethnic problems of Macedonia became an acute question that the Powers had to address. For some of the Powers, such as Germany and Britain,

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<sup>267</sup> Green to Granville, 23 December 1882, NA, FO, 424/128, Nr. 8 and 9.

<sup>268</sup> Salisbury to Musurush Pasha, 11 July 1885, HR. SFR 3 – 315, 3, 10-11.

<sup>269</sup> Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, p. 306.

<sup>270</sup> Dimitris Livanios, *The Macedonian Question – Britain and the Southern Balkans 1939-1949* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 16.

interest in the Balkans, during the post-Berlin period, remained low. Livanios has noted that 'if for Bismarck the Balkans were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier, for Britain the region hardly deserved the bones of a sturdy Liverpudlian sailor'.<sup>271</sup> This saying expressed quite adequately the interest of these two Powers.

The British government continued to support the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire in Europe and viewed the Balkans as a region outside its vital area of interest. Within such a context, there was no need to create a separate policy for the Albanian Question. On the topic of the Balkans, the British government believed that 'behind the Macedonian question lies the Turkish question'.<sup>272</sup> This meant that the Ottoman Empire depended very much on the stability of Macedonia. The main worry of the British continued to be Russia which was to be stopped from reaching the Balkans or the Bosphorus, a move that would destabilise the Ottoman Empire. For this reason the British governments never entirely accepted Russia's attitude towards the 'sick man of Europe' throughout this period.

At the beginning of the twentieth century British foreign policy towards the region started to change slowly. This departure from pro-Ottoman policy took place for many reasons, the most important of which was that geostrategic considerations and the growing pressure from the British public which became more knowledgeable about the region and demanded more protection for the Christians.<sup>273</sup> This pressure was channelled through the activities of the Balkan Committee and the press. British financiers also played their role by reminding the government about the Porte's inability to repay its loans. One more reason, probably the most worrying to the British, was German influence over the economy and politics of the Porte. Collectively, these led the British government to be more cautious about the creation of more autonomous or independent states and to seek a closer relationship with Russia. Yet the British believed that Russia should not be given a 'free hand to pursue her interests unimpeded' in the Balkans and Constantinople.<sup>274</sup>

Although the creation of new autonomous or independent states was not favoured by the British government, some Albanian leaders had approached Gladstone to ask for support.

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>272</sup> Goschen to Grey, 1 March 1908, NA, FO, 195/2304, Nr. 26.

<sup>273</sup> Michail, pp. 13-17.

<sup>274</sup> Livanios, p. 43.

When Gladstone formed his new government in 1886 he appointed the Earl of Rosebery as Foreign Secretary, who declared that there would be a policy of continuity in foreign affairs. To many observers in Britain, and probably to some Albanians, this announcement may have been understood to mean that the Liberal government would continue to apply some aspects of the Conservative approach in foreign policy. As a matter of fact, what Rosebery meant was that the continuity, as a guiding principle, was to be Liberal as established by Gladstone.<sup>275</sup>

An Albanian intellectual called Faik Konitza (1876 – 1942), who published the newspaper *Albania* in Brussels and London between 1899 and 1909, hoped to get support from the British government. He considered the Greeks the main obstacle to forming an Albanian state.<sup>276</sup> He also felt that the British Liberal government was treating the Greeks more favourably than the Albanians. In 1897, on behalf of the League for Albanian Independence, Konitza wrote to ‘the Great Old Man’, as he called Gladstone, with the intention of explaining the Albanian position and, possibly, ‘correcting’ British policy. Gladstone sent a negative reply and instead reaffirmed his policy, which was not in favour of the Albanian national cause.<sup>277</sup> As a result, Konitza wrote to Ibrahim Temo (1865 – 1945) to inform him that the British government has ‘refused to take Albania under protection’.<sup>278</sup> Temo and Konitza were supporters of Austro–Hungarian policy and took Gladstone’s reply as a sign that the Albanian leaders should seek closer links with Vienna. However, the early twentieth century would bring changes in British public opinion which would result in a reorientation of British foreign policy.

#### The Balkan Committee’s Liberal Approach and Autonomy for Macedonia

With the start of the twentieth century the public in Britain showed more interest in closer engagement with the Balkans. The rise and expansion of mass media, along with the

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<sup>275</sup> Gordon Martel, ‘Liberalism and Nationalism in the Middle East: Britain and the Balkan Crisis of 1886’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21. 2 (1985), pp. 172-191 (p. 181).

<sup>276</sup> Bejtullah Destani, ed., *Faik Konitza – Selected Correspondence* (London: The Centre for Albanian Studies, 2000), pp. 144-166.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10; Gladstone sent a short reply: ‘I do not make any distinction between Albanians, Greeks and other people with regard to their national rights to liberty, justice and humanity. It seems to me inappropriate for you to begin your plea for the Albanians by laying severe charges against the Greeks, who are at this moment engaged in an honourable task. In the present state of my knowledge of the question I regret being unable to say more’.

<sup>278</sup> Korrespondenca e personaliteteve shqiptare, AQSH F19: D. 32/4, F. 149.



development of communications and transport, increased this interest in international affairs and brought Britain into closer contact with the world. Journalism became an important vehicle of transmitting Balkan images in Britain. With the spread of information, which reached a wider spectrum of the public and increased their awareness, knowledge of the Balkans 'ceased being a matter of the few' as it had been a century earlier.<sup>279</sup>

Despite this increase in available information, media coverage of the Balkans was irregular and covered only those themes which were deemed extraordinary. The events that caught the public's imagination and the attention of the press were usually violent ones. Two such situations, the murder of the royal family in Belgrade and the Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia, occurred in the early summer of 1903 and triggered two different responses in Britain. The brutal murder of King Alexander and Queen Draga in Serbia was presented with great interest by the press in Britain. The story had all the ingredients needed to attract a wide readership and this shocking, violent act fortified British preconceptions of the 'bloody-mindedness' of Serbs and violence in the Balkans.<sup>280</sup> However, this ill-feeling towards Serbia was temporary and its image in Britain soon improved remarkably.

The press also showed similar attention to a second event, the Ilinden Uprising, which brought to the surface the multiple national questions of Macedonia, including the Albanian one. The Ilinden Uprising of 2 August 1903 took place while Ottoman troops were engaged in suppressing an Albanian uprising in the *vilayet* of Kosovo. The Ilinden Uprising was supported by local Albanians who supplied Macedonian bands with arms and ammunition. The insurgents occupied the town of Kruševo and formed a Provisional Assembly which had 60 delegates: 20 Macedonian, 20 Albanian and 20 Vlachs. Two Albanians, Gjorgji Çaçi and Nikolla Balo, were appointed among the six members of the Provisional Government. The Albanian press abroad and nationalist leaders called upon the Albanian population to further support the uprising in Macedonia.<sup>281</sup> At the same time, the press in Britain and Europe spread news that insurgents and the mob had used this

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<sup>279</sup> Michail, p. 5.

<sup>280</sup> James Evans, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), p. 88.

<sup>281</sup> Anamali and Prifti, pp. 311-312.

situation to attack non-Christians and destroy their properties in Kruševo and the region of Manastir.<sup>282</sup>

In British public life, as noted earlier, pressure to involve the government in the Balkans had started during the nineteenth century and intensified with the beginning of the twentieth century. This was thanks to the initiative of the Liberals, who continued to believe that problems in the Balkans would disappear only when the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist in this part of Europe. The Liberals supported, and in many cases initiated, propaganda against Ottoman misrule in Macedonia because they were convinced that peace in the Balkans would be possible only after a settlement was accepted by all Balkan people.<sup>283</sup> The Liberals continued to see the Balkans as a question of civilisation. Ottoman rule, and in some cases also Austro-Hungarian rule, were considered by Liberals to be preventing the progress of the Balkan peoples. Yet the solution offered by the Liberals did not necessarily mean that the Balkan people should be granted the right of self-determination, but rather considered various forms of autonomy. British Liberal politicians were already familiar with this matter as they were engaged in the ongoing debates about 'Home Rule' as a solution to the Irish question. The Liberals were willing to forgo autonomy for the Balkan people but only if the Porte was to undertake satisfactory reforms.<sup>284</sup>

With this approach, the Liberals maintained that the British had reached a higher stage of civilisation as a result of the development of democratic institutions and the economy which, in return, guaranteed them liberty and prosperity. Thus, they believed that they had the right and obligation to rule over 'less civilised' populations in the British Empire and at home 'over the Celtic fringe'. If British rule could not reach the 'less civilised' people outside their empire, then help would be offered to them. The historian Robert William Seton-Watson has described this help as conveying 'the image of the traditional moralising Briton who wished to radiate civilisation among those less fortunate'.<sup>285</sup>

In this context the Liberals felt obliged to get involved in changing the situation in the Balkans. To explain this commitment, the author George Bernard Shaw remarked that 'a

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<sup>282</sup> Rodogno, p. 238.

<sup>283</sup> Keith Robbins, *Politicians, Diplomacy & War in Modern British History* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), p. 216.

<sup>284</sup> James Andrew Perkins, *British Liberalism and the Balkans, c. 1875-1925*, PhD Thesis, Birkbeck University (2014), p. 11 <<http://vufind.lib.bbk.ac.uk/vufind/Record/492634>> [accessed 10 August 2016].

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

Liberal is a man who has three duties': to Ireland, Finland and Macedonia.<sup>286</sup> The Liberals believed that these three nations, each incorporated into three different multi-national empires, should be granted autonomy but only as constituent nations within each empire.<sup>287</sup>

A number of well-known British personalities, who were predominantly Liberal, were convinced that the press and the government were showing indifference towards the Balkans in general and the fate of Macedonia in particular. The problems of Macedonia made them come together in early July 1903 and form the Balkan Committee. Among the founding members were high profile scholars, politicians, clerics and journalists, such as Noel Buxton, Robert William Seton-Watson, Arthur Evans, William Miller, Arnold Toynbee, Harold Nicholson, Aubrey Herbert, Edith Durham, Henry Brailsford and many others.<sup>288</sup> All of them, excluding Durham and Brailsford, had studied history or classics at Oxford or Cambridge. By 1906 the list included 64 MPs, 55 of whom were Liberals, six from the Labour Party and three from Conservative ranks. The membership also included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of Hereford, Lincoln, Worcester, and Oxford. The Committee also attracted radical critics of British foreign policy such as journalist Henry Nevinson.<sup>289</sup> The member's list grew long with both highly educated personalities and members of the ordinary public and also included Lord Herbert Gladstone, the youngest son of William Gladstone.

The activities of the Committee were geared toward awakening public interest in the Balkan people and reminding the British government of the responsibilities it had assumed in the Treaty of Berlin, which included the protection of the Christian population under the rule of the Porte. In its first letter to the press the Committee announced that it would be engaged in 'diffusing accurate information by means of lectures, pamphlets, articles in the press and questions in Parliament.'<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Montserrat Guibernau, *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 256.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> The Balkan Committee, *Macedonia 1903* (London: Adelphi, 1903), p. 3.

<sup>289</sup> James Perkins, 'The Congo of Europe: The Balkans and Empire in Early Twentieth Century British Political Culture', *The Historical Journal*, 58. 2 (2015), pp. 565–587 (p. 571) <[http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0018246X14000260](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0018246X14000260)> [accessed 9 July 2016].

<sup>290</sup> 'Turkish misrule in Macedonia: An English Balkan Committee', *The Manchester Guardian and the Observer*, 28 July 1903, p. 5 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/474265291?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 6 May

The publication titled “Macedonia 1903” became the Committee’s manifesto. According to this manifesto, the British government had ‘not only the right, but the duty, to take any steps in her power to put an end to the present appalling state of things.’ The Committee acknowledged that Britain had no direct interest in the region like Austria-Hungary and Russia\_ and therefore it was suggested that the British government should restrain itself from taking independent actions. Consequently, the Committee argued that Britain ‘should endeavour to induce the other Powers to agree to a scheme’, which would help the Balkan people and should ask the Powers to unite in demanding the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Macedonia. The appointment of a European Governor, with complete control of the civil and military administration and the establishment of a gendarmerie commanded by European officers, were other necessary measures to follow.<sup>291</sup>

The Committee also published the “Autonomy Proposal”, a twelve-article document which was sent to the Sultan and relevant European governments to demand autonomy for Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Adrianople and outline details of a settlement for the region. It should be noted that considerable attention was shown to the Albanian Question in articles I and II:

- I. There shall be formed instead of the vilayets of Salonica, Bitola [Manastir], Kossovo, Adrianople, Scutari [Shkodra], and Janinna, four provinces, one of which will take the name of ‘Albania’ and the others that of ‘Macedonia,’ ‘Old Servia’ and ‘Thrace’. These provinces shall remain under the direct political and military authority of the H. I. M. the Sultan, under conditions of administrative autonomy;
- II. The province of Albania will include especially the vilayets of Scutari and Janinna; the province of Old Servia, the vilayet of Kossovo; and the province of Thrace, the vilayet of Adrianople.<sup>292</sup>

It is hard to understand the reason or the criteria that led to this division of autonomous provinces. The ‘Autonomy Proposal’ was ambiguous and satisfied neither the Albanian nor the other nationalist movements in the Balkans. This ambiguity stemmed from the fact that

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<sup>291</sup> The Balkan Committee, *Macedonia 1903*, p. 7.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

the division of the suggested autonomous provinces was not based on ethnic or religious principles. Albania would consist of only two *vilayets* (Shkodra and Janina) and not four *vilayets* as foreseen by the Albanian national programme. Kosovo, as proposed, was to become a separate autonomous province while the *vilayet* of Manastir would become part of Macedonia. The fact that Kosovo was to become a separate autonomous unit and called 'Old Serbia' must have caused worries among Albanian leaders and the Serbian government, as both claimed the place for themselves. Nevertheless, from the Albanian perspective the proposal contained some positive elements, namely that this was the first proposal for the autonomy of Albania to be presented to the Porte and the European Powers by a British organisation, a fact which was to become important later.

Led by chairman Noel Buxton (later Lord Noel-Buxton) who became a Liberal MP in 1905, the Balkan Committee started furnishing the press and government with articles and letters containing information about the difficulties in Macedonia and suggestions on how to deal with these problems. Between 29 September and 16 November 1903 the Balkan Committee organised around 150 public meetings all over Britain. On every occasion Noel Buxton and other leading members informed the public and state officials that the Committee's plan for Macedonia was to remove the Sultan's direct rule and establish a government which would be responsible to the Powers.<sup>293</sup> As soon as the Committee was formed, Edith Durham, Lady Thompson, Henry Brailsford and the brothers Noel and Charles Buxton went to Macedonia in an aid and fact-finding mission. As the delegation discovered, the Macedonian uprising was not simply directed against Ottoman rule and local Muslims but was also a dangerous conflict between the idea of Greater Bulgaria and the Greek 'Megali Idea'. Macedonia had also become a place for religious clashes between the Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox churches, a conflict also known as patriarchists vs exarchists.<sup>294</sup>

After the visit to Macedonia, Brailsford, Durham and Noel Buxton published their works and became known as travel and expert writers. This group, often called New Europe,<sup>295</sup> was joined by Aubrey Herbert and James David Burchier of *The Times*, the longest serving British correspondent in the Balkans. However, at this time none of these writers had any

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<sup>293</sup> Rodogno, p. 236.

<sup>294</sup> Robbins, pp. 216-217.

<sup>295</sup> See Chapter 2: 'Experts and their Networks: The Power of Image Making', in Eugene Michail, *The British and the Balkan*.

particular knowledge of Albania. Some members of the Committee, including Brailsford, were among the last British philhellenes to be disappointed with Greece. In 1897 Brailsford had joined a regiment of British volunteers, inspired by Byron, to fight in the Greco-Turkish war but he left feeling no sympathy for the Greek cause. He soon found another cause to support, north of Greece, in Macedonia.<sup>296</sup> His knowledge about the region and its people was shown in his book, which became a reference source on Macedonia at that time.<sup>297</sup> Other publications continued with Noel Buxton's *Europe and the Turks* and with Edith Durham who covered Macedonia and the wider area of the Balkans.

With these books and other numerous academic publications and articles the Balkan Committee, through its expert writers, marked a new and important period in forming the image of the Balkans in Britain. The Balkans was presented as a region that should matter to the British public and government. The Committee brought together experts and members of the public interested in this region where previously diplomats had been the main source of information and debates were mainly initiated by politicians. For obvious reasons, the Foreign Office was not keen on the appearance of self-appointed expert writers and the Committee. Officials, diplomats and politicians publicly questioned their abilities and credentials while privately ridiculing them.<sup>298</sup> Yet officials were also worried that these expert writers possessed the knowledge and the ability to exercise influence over the British public. To explain the power of these experts, historian A. J. P. Taylor later wrote that those interested in Balkan affairs would have done well to refer to Durham on Albania, Brailsford on Macedonia, R. W. Seton-Watson on Hungary or Serbia. Taylor maintained that one who reads these authors 'would be better informed than if he had stuck to official channels'.<sup>299</sup>

The Committee's initiative for involvement in the Balkans was not a new idea. As noted earlier, the idea emerged during the early nineteenth century and resulted in the formation of the Greek Committee which went on to build a positive picture of Bulgaria and Serbia. According to Eugene Michail, the Balkan Committee represented a modernised version of the nineteenth century tradition of engagement with the Balkans 'which was personified by

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid, pp. 58-59.

<sup>297</sup> See: Henry N. Brailsford, *Macedonia, its Races and their Future* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906).

<sup>298</sup> Michail, p. 41.

<sup>299</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy 1792-1939* (London: H. Hamilton, 1957), p. 96.

Lord Byron and William Gladstone' who were 'sympathetic to the Balkan nationalist movement'.<sup>300</sup> Noel Buxton emphasised Gladstone's role and the duty of Europe to support the Balkan Christians:

As Mr. Gladstone said, the Christian who retained his faith at the price of slavery, when by recanting he could obtain every favour, is entitled to the name of martyr, and to him also Europe owes the gratitude that is due to the rampart which saved it.<sup>301</sup>

In the Balkan Committee Noel Buxton represented the principal thoughts of the Liberals and saw the relationship between East and West as a 'conflict of two fundamental principles of life'. He explained this relationship as 'the Mahomedan principle, namely, of a belief in conquering power, and the Christian principle which looks to the forces of the spirit and the mind.' Therefore, he suggested that this 'reality' is a 'matter of foreign affairs' and called for the British government to act in favour of the Christians.<sup>302</sup>

But, the Committee, with the presence of Aubrey Herbert and a few others, also represented the political views of the Conservatives under Disraeli, who had shown sympathy for the Ottomans and for the Albanian nationalist movement. Herbert, to whom we shall return later, became an advocate of Albanian independence. According to Noel Malcolm, Herbert was engaged in supporting the weak, which put him in contrast with two existing traditions or schools of thought in British foreign policy: the romantic liberal and realist conservative approaches.<sup>303</sup> But, until 1912, Herbert's attitude remained conservative and did not differ much from the attitude held by diplomats in the Foreign Office and other bureaucrats in the government. However, from the outset of the Committee's work all these different approaches had merged into one 'common theme of a liberal, dissenting and non-conformist support for the Balkans'.<sup>304</sup>

Although the Balkans was not a direct British interest at the beginning of the twentieth century the British government saw the future of the Balkans as a possible strategic objective. Brailsford maintained that 'the Slav peasant has no passwords to the foreigner's

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<sup>300</sup> Michael, p. 12.

<sup>301</sup> Noel Buxton, *Europe and the Turks* (London: John Murray, 1907), p. 28.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

<sup>303</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. x.

<sup>304</sup> Michael, p. 12.

heart'.<sup>305</sup> In other words, the Slavs could not attract the attention of the British as the classical heritage of the Greeks had done. However, the Balkans became a place that managed to attract attention in Britain and elsewhere in Western Europe. Perkins wrote that 'for some reason' the Balkan nationalities managed to exercise 'a fascination over the mind' of some British politicians and intellectuals.<sup>306</sup> Maria Todorova has linked the discussion of the Liberals about problems at home such as Irish Home Rule and the suffragettes with the problems in the Balkans. She has suggested that 'the poor, but Christian' population of the Balkans were 'described in a discourse almost identical to the one used to depict the western lower classes' and characterised this similarity as 'a virtual parallel between the East End of London and the East End of Europe'.<sup>307</sup> Along these lines, Perkins has added that 'humanitarian activity in the Balkan arena was a kind of antidote to the guilt generated by the existence of widespread poverty at home.'<sup>308</sup>

Edith Durham, after spending a considerable amount of time in Macedonia, working as a relief worker on behalf of the Balkan Committee and as a journalist, held a different view. She was convinced that the Balkans were not a serious concern for British politicians nor for the press. She compared the liberal, radical and conservative press coverage and concluded that the Balkans were simply being used to influence politics at home and most of their concern was about the future of the British Empire. On this matter, Durham wrote that 'not one of the said papers cares twopenny jam about the good of the Balkan peoples'.<sup>309</sup>

However, Durham was the first expert to identify the Albanian Question as the main problem in the Balkans and to show that this question was neglected by the Balkan Committee and the British government. She believed that ignoring the Albanian Question was a big mistake and felt the fact that the Albanian Question 'was always left out of consideration was a constant source of difficulty'.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, p. 111.

<sup>306</sup> Perkins, *British Liberalism*, p. 16.

<sup>307</sup> Todorova, p. 18.

<sup>308</sup> Perkins, p. 21.

<sup>309</sup> Edith Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1905), pp. 205-206.

<sup>310</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 87.



## The Powers' failure in Macedonia

The Balkan Committee played its role in influencing the British government to organise an international intervention in Macedonia and in the pro-Macedonian agitation which spread quickly in Europe. This pressure resulted in speeding up the reforms foreseen by the Mürzsteg Agreement, signed on 2 October 1903 by Austria-Hungary and Russia. The agreement aimed to oversee the implementation of reforms designed to restore law and order and prevent future disturbances and massacres in Macedonia, which was to be done through a reorganisation of the Ottoman gendarmerie. These reforms were similar to several of the points adopted by the Balkan Committee since its formation, but it was clear that they did not focus on establishing the autonomy of Macedonia understood as the *vilayets* of Salonika, Manastir and a part of Kosovo.<sup>311</sup> The reforms therefore emphasised the maintenance of Ottoman territorial integrity, despite their interference in Ottoman affairs.

In January 1904, the Italian government selected General de Giorgis to supervise the reorganisation of the Macedonian gendarmerie as part of the implementation of the reform programme. Colonel Fairholme was appointed as British Staff Officer and was assigned to the region of Drama. Among the Powers there were discussions of including some of the Albanian districts such as Korça in the reforms, but these were excluded from the operation of the scheme.<sup>312</sup> In reality, many other such districts were included but the Powers chose to ignore the presence of those Albanians who inhabited a considerable part of the *vilayets* of Manastir and Kosovo. Such was the region of Skopje, which was given to the Austro-Hungarians and Manastir to the Italians. In the districts of Ohri (Ohrida), Resna, Prespa, Kruševo, Demir Hisar and Kërçova (Kičevo), Albanian revolutionary bands made an appearance in reaction to Macedonian, Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian bands. Reports from the British consul showed that the Muslim populations (mainly Albanian) of Skopje, Ishtip and Kumanovo were alarmed about the more than 70 murders committed against them within a short time and considered organising themselves like the other Macedonian

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<sup>311</sup> Rodogno, p. 239.

<sup>312</sup> David Gillard, ed., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs – Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part 1, Series B, Vol. 19, The Ottoman Empire: Nationalism and Revolution 1885-1908* (University Publications of America, 1985), p. 176, (Memorandum respecting the proposed Reorganisation of the Macedonian Gendarmerie).

revolutionary bands. The few European police officers who were there to reform the gendarmerie found themselves powerless. Colonel Fairholme reported that the Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs were 'allowed to cut each other's throats with impunity and the Albanians were showing signs of moving'.<sup>313</sup>

In years to come, the Bulgarian exarchist campaign against the Greek patriarchists continued. Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek bands who entered Macedonia carried out terrorist attacks against Muslims and, more often against each other.<sup>314</sup> From 1903 to 1908 in Macedonia, which was thought to consist of 1.5 million inhabitants, over 10,000 people were murdered. In most violent ways, the bands were competing to establish superiority and win European sympathy and support. The call of the Balkan Committee for intervention was ignored. The British, as well as other Powers, refused any military engagement on the ground. When massacres took place and properties were destroyed, European officers could only observe, take photographs and prepare reports.<sup>315</sup>

In January 1905, the British Foreign Secretary Lansdowne wrote that Macedonia had become the most difficult and embarrassing problem for Britain and the Powers. The Balkan Committee had certainly exercised influence in the Foreign Office. As a result of this influence 'Lansdowne lived in terror' and made 'efforts to stiffen the reform proposals of the Mürzteg Powers and to secure more influence for British officials on the reform commissions.'<sup>316</sup>

Lansdowne acknowledged that gendarmes alone were not an answer to this problem and pointed out the need to adopt an Organic Statute in Macedonia like the one adopted in Crete as foreseen by Article XXIII of the Treaty of Berlin. This was also one of the demands made by the Balkan Committee. In a memorandum Lansdowne proposed new measures to be taken on the Macedonian problem<sup>317</sup> which came close to the Balkan Committee's request, but it never materialised. In December 1905 Lansdowne was replaced by Edward Grey, who resisted the Balkan Committee's pressure. The new Foreign Secretary believed that the Balkan Committee and other organisations that pressured for British involvement

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid, Doc. 51, p. 196; Doc. 52, p. 226-7, Memorandum on Macedonia (Foreign Office Memorandum Nr. 8294, 8 December 1904).

<sup>314</sup> O'Connor to Grey, 4 April 1906, NA, FO, 371/149, Nr. 232.

<sup>315</sup> Rodogno, p. 244.

<sup>316</sup> Francis Harry Hinsley, ed., *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 167.

<sup>317</sup> Gillard, Vol. 19, pp. 266-680, (Lansdowne to Bertie, Doc. 59, Enclosure in Doc. 55).

in the Balkans did not have the support of the public. Grey's 'inactivity' was not welcomed by the Balkan Committee and other outside experts, who also thought they were not being consulted sufficiently by the Foreign Office. The Committee continued to pressure the Foreign Office on the progress of reforms but the answer from the government was that there was no unanimity among the Powers to speed the reforms and no desire for more engagement.<sup>318</sup> Grey wrote to James Bryce, who was initially elected president of the Balkan Committee, explaining that the other difficulty was the jealousy that existed between the Powers and their lack of will to use force.<sup>319</sup>

Albanian leaders had not been happy with the reform program from the start. They were characterised as Christians, as the majority of them were in southern Macedonia, but they wanted to be known only as Albanians. After the Ilinden Uprising was suppressed by the Porte, Albanian nationalist leaders abroad gathered in their colony in Bucharest and sent a memorandum to the Powers. They demanded recognition as a nationality, the opening of Albanian schools, the establishment of an Albanian Orthodox Church and the appointment of a representative in the Commission of Reforms in Manastir.<sup>320</sup> Their demands were ignored.

The Porte also complained about the reforms and about European officers serving in the gendarmerie. The Ottoman government addressed a complaint to the Powers about Italian intrigues in the Albanian part of Macedonia. Morica, one of the Italian gendarmerie officers, who was an Albanian from southern Italy, was creating a network with Albanian nationalist leaders and the population of the region of Ohri, where he was stationed. Morica's aim was to organise Albanians for reopening schools in their language and prepare them to work towards independence under Italian influence. The Porte was worried because Morica had become very popular among the Albanians.<sup>321</sup>

The Porte was also aware that Italy and Austria-Hungary had reached an understanding in 1897 on a common policy towards Albania and that both governments subsidised Albanian nationalist leaders. Since 1895 around 200,000 Albanians in southern Italy, under the

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<sup>318</sup> Balkan Committee to Grey, 29 May 1906, NA, FO, 371/151, Nr. 1 and Foreign Office to Balkan Committee, Nr. 165.

<sup>319</sup> Robins, p. 217.

<sup>320</sup> Ismet Dërmaku, *Lidhjet Shqiptaro-Maqedone dhe Çështja e Reformave në Turqinë Evropiane në fund të shek. XIX dhe në fillim të shek XX* (Prishtinë: Vjetari i Arkivit të Kosovës, X-XI, 1979), p.75.

<sup>321</sup> O'Connor to Grey, 29 May 1906, NA, FO, 371/151, Nr. 370.

leadership of Jeronim de Rada (1814-1903), the best known Arbëresh writer in Italy and the main figure of the Albanian nationalist movement of the nineteenth century, had been pressurising their government in Rome to take actions to protect Albania. This movement worried that the Austro-Hungarian government, which believed that the activities of Italo-Albanians would result in an Italian protectorate in Albania. Both governments in Vienna and Rome were convinced that the other was working for supremacy in the Adriatic.<sup>322</sup> Other rivalries and misunderstandings between Russia and Austria-Hungary culminated in the Sultan's approval to construct a railway from Novi Pazar to Mitrovica. Russia and other Powers feared that Austria-Hungary was preparing for access to Salonika and to occupy Macedonia, which in turn strained relations between Austria-Hungary and Russia and, as a result, the Mürzsteg Agreement was abandoned in February 1908.<sup>323</sup>

#### The success and failure of the Balkan Committee

Similar rivalries also existed among Balkan Committee members, with each seeking to support their preferred Balkan country. Thus the Balkan Committee was not as homogenous as it had intended to be and efforts to keep up the appearance of unity were short lived. As noted above, the committee was dominated by Liberal politicians and religious leaders who continued the Gladstonian tradition of supporting Bulgaria, Greece or Serbia, being anti-Ottoman and disregarding the Muslim population. Brailsford and Buxton accepted that the Bulgarian claim on Macedonia was better founded than any of the other claims. Bouchier, claiming to have first-hand information, long experience and deep knowledge of Macedonia, firmly supported Brailsford's and Buxton's position on Bulgaria.<sup>324</sup> This caused other members to declare their priorities: Herbert and Durham went on to champion Albania's case, Alexander Devine supported Montenegro, R. W. Seton-Watson and Henry Baerlein were in favour of Serbia's expansion and Pember Reeves advocated for the Greek cause. Whenever tensions were raised or conflicts took place in

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<sup>322</sup> Lillian Parker Wallace and William C. Askew, eds., *Power, Public Opinion, and Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Duke U.P., 1959), pp. 198-199.

<sup>323</sup> Gerd, p. 14.

<sup>324</sup> Robins, p. 217.

the region, these committee members were ready to fight a 'proxy Balkan war' in the British press and lecture halls.<sup>325</sup>

Nevertheless, these expert writers managed to occupy the public sphere and to decide which events should attract public attention. They established a trend which regarded the Ottoman Empire as a regime of tyranny, unmanageable and unable to reform and the vast majority of them held pro-Christian and anti-Ottoman (Muslim) views.<sup>326</sup> Edith Durham, although being anti-Ottoman, challenged this discourse:

When a Moslem kills a Moslem it does not count; when a Christian kills a Moslem it is a righteous act; when a Christian kills a Christian it is an error of judgment better not talked about; it is only when a Moslem kills a Christian that we arrive at a full-blown 'atrocitv'.<sup>327</sup>

In general, the Balkan Committee succeeded in presenting Balkan affairs in the British public sphere but failed in fulfilling its main aim: to contribute to creating autonomous provinces by applying reforms and bringing positive changes to protect the people of Macedonia. The committee never attempted to overcome the prejudices against Islam which were created by Gladstone's Liberal policy and this could be considered the main reason for its failure. Most of the members failed to recognise problems that the population in Macedonia faced and instead saw the situation only through the prism of religion – Christians suffering under the rule of the Ottomans and, by extension, Muslims. A significant number of the Muslim (the majority of whom were Albanian), Vlah and Jewish populations, were simply ignored. The situation was also complicated by the administrative division that the Porte had imposed in Macedonia. As a matter of fact, the Porte did not use or recognise the term Macedonia but used the name Rumelia which consisted of the *vilayets* of Salonika, Manastir and Kosovo. Albanians numerically dominated the western part of the *vilayet* of Manastir and most of the *vilayet* of Kosovo, while their presence in *vilayet* of Salonika was low. The Porte continued with this division, which was made in such

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<sup>325</sup> Lucian M. Ashworth and David Mitrany, 'South-East Europe: The Balkan Key to World Peace', *The Historical Review, Institute for Neohellenic Research*, 2 (2005), pp.203-224 (pp. 210-211).

<sup>326</sup> Michail. p. 81.

<sup>327</sup> Edith Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), p. 81.

a way that the Muslim element was a majority in all *vilayets* but it partitioned the Albanians in order to create obstacles to the 'formation of homogenous and united Albania'.<sup>328</sup>

Many of the Macedonian towns, such as Manastir and Salonika, were so mixed with different ethnic groups and religions that it was impossible to designate a majority group. Albanian and Bulgarian nationalists had marked Manastir as their important cultural place and competed for superiority, but the Balkan Committee regarded the town as Bulgarian. Until 1903 Salonika was known as a multinational place where people lived a tolerant and prosperous life. At the beginning of the twentieth century the town had around 150,000 inhabitants. The population was roughly 30% Muslim, including Albanians, 30% Christian, while the Jewish population was considered to consist the rest which comes to 40%.<sup>329</sup> After the Balkan Wars, First World War, and particularly after the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922, when the town was given to Greece, much of the non-Christian and non-Greek population was expelled and the Greeks rose to 75% of the population. The non-Greek population continued to decline rapidly to an almost insignificant percentage.<sup>330</sup> Throughout these wars the British government supported Greece which was seen as an ally that could protect British interests in the Aegean route to India and in reshaping the Near and Middle East. Supporting Greece or any other country was against the Committee's initial ideas and programmes and this further contributed to creating groups of interest within the committee.

Herbert and Durham believed that the Committee was largely overlooking the Albanian national question. In a telegram that Durham sent to the British Consulate in Shkodra, which was forwarded to the Foreign Office, she wrote that Albanian Catholic villages which were burned and looted by the Ottoman army were in a deplorable state and desperately needed help but the Balkan Committee, as she put it, 'only helps Bulgars'.<sup>331</sup> Herbert called the committee an organisation with a 'lot of cursed old women' who were not able to

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<sup>328</sup> Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>329</sup> Gabor Agoston and Bruce Alan Masters, *Encyclopaedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2009), p. 504.

<sup>330</sup> Mark Mazower, *Salonica – City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), pp. 303-331.

<sup>331</sup> Durham to McGregor, 5 October 1908, NA, FO, 371/560, Nr. 38770.

‘protest with any effectuality about massacres and who do take a ghoulish delight in mentioning them’.<sup>332</sup>

The number of members of the Committee who opposed the idea of an independent Albania was significant and initially led by R. W. Seton-Watson. However, there were some members, such as Brailsford and Nevinson, who were not entirely supporters of Albanian nationalism but still maintained that the Albanians deserved their state. Brailsford believed that Albanians, particularly those of the south, were a ‘relatively civilised population’ and as such ‘would bring progress and prosperity’ to the Balkans if they were to establish their independent state. He opposed the idea of awarding Albanian territory to Serbia and Montenegro because these two countries could not exercise cultural superiority and political maturity over the Albanians. However, he believed that Greece did possess these qualities and therefore could obtain the Albanian part of Epirus. Hence, Brailsford maintained that the size and borders of Albania were ‘essentially a question of civilisation rather than ethnography.’<sup>333</sup>

Brailsford, for a peculiar reason, played down the role and effect of Islam on Albanians who were ‘nearly all heretics’.<sup>334</sup> He wrote that ‘Islam is never a satisfying creed to a people of European race’. This could be understood to mean that Brailsford, like many other Committee members, regarded Islam as an Asiatic religion and as such an ‘alien culture’ unbefitting of the European Albanians, who themselves had no similarities with the Muslim Turks. On this issue, he added:

And yet they [Albanians] remain a race apart from the Turks and profoundly hostile to them. There is no community of blood between them and even in their mosques the barrier between East and West divides them. For the Albanian is essentially a European - a European of the Middle Ages. Alone of all races in Turkey, he [Albanian] has a hereditary aristocracy and a feudal system, Islam, among Eastern peoples, is everywhere a leveller.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 74.

<sup>333</sup> Perkins, *British Liberalism*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>334</sup> Brailsford, *Macedonia*, p. 241.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid*, p. 235.

Brailsford, like all other Liberals, did not see Islam and Christianity as holding the same level of importance and considered religion, and not ethnicity, as a prime factor for Balkan nations. However, Brailsford believed the Albanians to have 'the makings of a united people' and therefore suggested that autonomy was the best solution for them. Autonomy would also solve the religious problem because 'under a Christian Prince vast number of Albanians would return to Christianity.'<sup>336</sup> Despite the emphasised religious differences and the fact that he was pro-Bulgarian, Brailsford suggested that the British government should use its influence to support autonomy for Albania. This would increase British predominance in the balance of power in the Balkan region, and Albanians would serve as a 'vanguard against the dangerous invasion of Pan Slavism in the East'.<sup>337</sup> Brailsford made an important point by emphasising the existence of common interest of the Albanians with the British and suggesting that London should adopt a favourable or separate policy on this matter. However, the British government disregarded this advice and did not endorse such a policy.

### Conclusion

The aftermath of the Congress of Berlin showed that the British government expressed no particular interest in Albania. In the early twentieth century, the Liberals continued to lobby for the protection of the Christians in the Balkans. These activities, which continued the Gladstonian tradition, resulted in the formation of the Balkan Committee, an organisation which channelled their ideas to the public and pressured the government. The committee succeeded in raising public awareness in Britain about the Balkans and in exercising considerable pressure on the British government to undertake reforms in Macedonia in cooperation with the Powers.

However, the implementation of reforms, as foreseen in the Mürzsteg Agreement of 1903, failed because the Powers showed no willingness to become fully engaged in Macedonia. The Balkan Committee therefore failed to fulfil its main goals of autonomy for Macedonia and to prevent the violence that had erupted as a result of aggressive nationalist ideas.

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 287-8.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, p. 289.



Such ideas were promoted by various groups that enjoyed the support of those countries in the Balkans which had territorial claims on the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire in Europe.

The Committee also failed to address the Albanian Question even though its programme initially gave this issue considerable priority by calling for autonomy for Albania. Much like in the late nineteenth century, the Albanian Question did not receive much support because of the Liberal view on religion and a general lack of knowledge about Albania. As a result of the plurality of interests among its members, the committee was not able to speak with one voice and present the Macedonian question in a coherent manner. Therefore, it split into factions that supported the Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs and Albanians. The Albanian Question, which competed with the Serbian Question, lost the battle for British support. Serbia, taking an anti-Austro-Hungarian stance, became the ally of Britain in the Balkans, a stance which was supported by most members of the Balkan Committee. But, Macedonia was left with national problems, unsolved to this day.

## Chapter IV

### The Albanian national movement and the Young Turk Revolution 1899 – 1908

*Alongside, and yet independent of the Young Turkish movement, with which it appeared to be sometimes in collaboration and sometimes in direct opposition, there was noticeable throughout the year another Nationalist movement of which it seems probable that more will be heard in near future. This is the Albanian movement which, though known to exist as far back as the Congress of Berlin, had made little apparent progress up to the end of 1907. – Gerald Lowther, British ambassador in Constantinople.<sup>338</sup>*

## Introduction

The report of the British Embassy in Constantinople, which described the general situation in the Ottoman Empire for the year 1907, noted the rise of Albanian nationalism and its peculiar relationship with the secret organisation - the Young Turks.<sup>339</sup> This report characterised Macedonia as the base of Albanian nationalist activists who joined the Young Turk Movement and succeeded in forcing the Sultan to reinstate the Constitution and declare free elections. Below we shall see how it came to be that the Sultan, a despotic ruler, accepted all the requests of the Young Turk organisation, in which the Albanians played a major role, and British involvement in these developments.

The purpose of this chapter is to argue that the Macedonian crisis played a central role in the development of the Albanian nationalist programme and in the lead-up to the Young Turk Revolution. This chapter covers an important period of the Albanian Question which started in 1899, when Sami Frashëri (1850-1904), the most important Albanian national

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<sup>338</sup> Lowther to Grey, 13 November 1908, NA, FO, 40852/39815/08/44, Nr. 773; See Yearly (1907) Report from the British Embassy in Constantinople in Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, p. 290.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

ideologist at the time, created the Albanian nationalist ideology precisely because the situation in Macedonia. This period ended with the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 which had a significant impact on Macedonia and Kosovo.

The chapter also shows that during this period the British government did not follow a separate policy on the Albanian Question. Albania was viewed within the context of the Macedonian Question, which itself was an integral part of the Eastern Question. Based on their strategic interests, the Powers pursued conflicting policies regarding how best to handle the gradual withdrawal of the Ottomans from the Balkans. In this respect, the Powers introduced the Mürzsteg Agreement in 1903 and allowed Austria-Hungary and Russia to lead in implementing the reforms foreseen by this agreement. The reforms did not prevent the campaign of terror which was waged by Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian and Greek rival bands in Macedonia, but Britain and the Powers were satisfied with their efforts in preventing the eruption of a wider conflict between the nations in the Balkans.

As seen in the previous chapter, the British government, under pressure from certain sectors of the public, was pushed to make changes in order to protect the Christian population in Macedonia. By the beginning of the twentieth century, British foreign policy made a slow departure from its traditional pro-Ottoman policy but could not go as far as taking independent or separate measures, as some members of the British Parliament and the public requested. Further changes were foreseen in the Agreement of Reval between Britain and Russia in June 1908. The meeting of King Edward VII and Tsar Nicholas II in Reval (later Tallinn, the capital of Estonia) came after Russia and Austria-Hungary fell out over the implementation of the Mürzsteg Agreement. In Reval, the Russian and British governments reached an understanding about the pacification of the Macedonian *vilayets* (Salonika, Manastir and Kosovo) and the imposition of further reforms. They agreed to settle their differences and appoint a governor with the agreement of the European Powers. The Reval Agreement, which was opposed by Austria-Hungary, also heralded an alliance between Russia and Britain against the rising power of Germany.<sup>340</sup>

The chapter also argues that Albanian nationalism took a new turn because of developments in Macedonia, as these had an effect on both Albanian and Ottoman political

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<sup>340</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 2, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975*, (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 211.

life. This effect will be shown through Sami Frashëri's work and by examining the role of nationalists, conservatives and local leaders in the events that took place during this period. It will also be argued that the situation in Macedonia and the role of the Powers in this region contributed to shaping the Young Turk Movement and to bringing about the revolution.

This subject is important for the thesis because it covers a crucial period in the history of the Albanian national movement. It argues that Albanian figures played a great role in founding the Young Turk movement and developing it up to the revolution has been underestimated thus far.<sup>341</sup> It is hard to imagine that the revolution would have succeeded without the involvement of the Albanian nationalists in Manastir, Ferizaj and, partly, in Salonika. Therefore, there is a need to explain an often overlooked element of this important period.

#### British Foreign Policy and the Albanian Question 1903 – 1908

The aftermath of the Congress of Berlin showed low interest in Albania on the part of the British government. This low interest can be illustrated by the fact that, by the end of the nineteenth century, all diplomatic and consular representations were withdrawn from the country. In 1903 William Miller, a historian and member of the Balkan Committee, noted that 'at the present moment, when [the] Albanian Question is before the public, we have no British Consul [...] Thus for the whole of Albania we have one at Scutari [Shkodra]'.<sup>342</sup> Even the representative in Shkodra, Nikollë Gjon Suma, was an Acting Vice Consul and native Albanian.<sup>343</sup> The British Foreign Office did not pay much attention to Macedonia either, although it had the means and opportunities to do so.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Studies that have recognised the role of the Albanians in the build-up to the Young Turk Revolution include: Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*; Malcolm, *Kosovo*; Basil Kondis, *Greece and Albania 1908-1914* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1976); Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*; Tokay, *Macedonian Question*; Christopher Psilos, *The Young Turk Revolution and the Macedonian Question 1908-1912* (PhD Thesis - The University of Leeds, Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies, 2000).

<sup>342</sup> Robert Elsie and Bejtullah Destani, eds., *The Macedonian Question in the Eyes of British Journalists 1899-1919* (London: Centre for Albanian Studies, 2015), p.92; William Miller, *The Macedonian Claimants* (London: The Contemporary Review, 1903), pp. 468-484.

<sup>343</sup> Edith Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920) p. 93.

<sup>344</sup> Elsie and Destani, *The Macedonian Question*, p. 91.

Miller, a supporter of Gladstone's policy, wanted to exert pressure on the British government using the people who knew the region. His aim was to show that Macedonia should belong to Macedonians in the same way it had been shown and accepted that Bulgaria should belong to Bulgarians or Serbia to the Serbs. Miller, like many other members of the Balkan Committee, was worried that the Macedonians were under pressure to assimilate by the Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians and Serbs who competed for national superiority in Macedonia.<sup>345</sup> Yet they also admitted that winning the British government over to their way of thinking was a difficult task.

The governments of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia continued to send their bands to Macedonia to work in their favour. The presence of the Serbian bands in Macedonia was even confirmed by Serbian diplomats in Skopje and it was known in Belgrade that a certain Milorad Gocevac had recruited men to join the armed bands sent to Macedonia.<sup>346</sup> All armed bands fought each other and frequently massacred the innocent population. The Ottomans rarely intervened but when they did, they used a heavy hand. Edith Durham witnessed such situations while she was in Macedonia during 1903-4 and was surprised by the answer she received when she expressed her condolences to the Bulgarian Bishop of Ohri about a massacre the Ottomans committed in that region. The Bishop was disappointed that the Ottomans did not kill more of his flock so that the Powers would have intervened. Out of desperation he suggested that all foreigners and consuls should be killed because 'it was their own fault' for not intervening. His rival, the Greek Bishop, had similar views, though they both preferred Macedonia to be ruled by the Porte than by each other.<sup>347</sup>

Durham also noted an increase in anti-British feelings by the bishops and Slavic population of Macedonia, which came as a result of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. The Christian Slavs were greatly influenced by the Pan-Slav propaganda directed from Russia, and since the British government was not intervening in Macedonia and instead allied with Japan, Britain was seen as being anti-Russian and, therefore, anti-Christian. The Bulgarian Bishop

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<sup>345</sup> Vesna Lopičić and Biljana Mišić Ilić, eds., *Values Across Cultures and Times* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014) p. 88.

<sup>346</sup> Срђан Рудић, ed., *Велика Британија и македонско питање 1903-1908* (Београд: Историјски институт, 2011), pp. 133-135.

<sup>347</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, pp. 82-83.

believed that 'England had always been the foe of the Balkan Slavs and had attacked their only friend [Russia]'.<sup>348</sup>

Such situations made Macedonia a complicated matter for the British and the other Powers. Macedonian speaking Christians regarded themselves as Macedonian but some saw themselves as Bulgarian. Some were members of the Bulgarian Church and some belonged to the Greek Church. The majority of the Albanians in Macedonia were Muslim while the rest were Christian Orthodox who were identified by the Powers with the Greek Church. The situation was further complicated by the neighbouring states who had territorial pretensions and refused to acknowledge the existence of the Macedonians as a separate ethnicity or Macedonia as a territorial unit. As McCarthy notes, 'if it were not confusing, it would have not been Macedonia'.<sup>349</sup>

As a result of these difficulties, but more due to lack of interest, the British government made the decision not to intervene. Prime Minister Arthur Balfour was blamed by the British press and pressure groups, such as the pro-Slav Balkan Committee, for having admitted the horrors but for having condemned them in words only. Parts of the British press believed that Balfour's decision not to intervene went against the wish of a great many voters. An article published in *The Spectator* explained the Ottoman reaction against the bands and the population in Macedonia by comparing it with the actions of the British in their dominions in Asia:

They [Ottomans] have burnt many villages, as we [British] are sometimes compelled to do in [the] Himalayas, there being no other way of teaching a wild people that they must live quietly.<sup>350</sup>

From the Ilinden Uprising of 1903 to the beginning of 1908, the British government recognised the leading role of Austria-Hungary and Russia in implementing the reform programme as foreseen by the Mürzsteg Agreement. Other Powers agreed that Austria-Hungary had the right to be more interested in the Balkans because it was in administration of Bosnia and the *sanjak* of Novi Pazar, which was part of the *vilayet* of Kosovo, while Russia had the right to protect the Slav Orthodox Christians. However, the reforms did not

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<sup>348</sup> Edith Durham, 'Slavonic Anglophobia', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 October 1904; Destani, *M. Edith Durham*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>349</sup> Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Peoples and the end of Empire* (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>350</sup> Elsie and Destani, *The Macedonian Question*, pp. 238 – 239.

prevent the campaign of terror which was waged by Bulgarian, Macedonian, Greek and Serbian bands until 1908. However, the Powers managed to prevent the eruption of a wider conflict which would have engulfed them into it.<sup>351</sup>

The British government was not happy with the slow pace of the implementation of the Mürzsteg Agreement and continued to put pressure on the European Powers and the Porte. Simultaneously it gave signs that if reforms were to collapse then two solutions would be sought: Macedonia might be partitioned, with the largest part given to Bulgaria, or become autonomous under a governor who would be independent and appointed by the Powers without consultation with or approval from the Sultan. Interestingly, the first solution would have been against the interests of Britain and the Powers because, as we have seen in the second chapter, the situation would be similar to that which followed the Treaty of San Stefano, when the government of Disraeli had refused the Treaty completely and brought about the Congress of Berlin as a result.<sup>352</sup> Partition was also against the interests of the nationalist movements of Albania and Bulgaria, who were ready and able to oppose such a settlement, since they would not agree between themselves and would also refuse to give any part of Macedonia to Greece and Serbia.<sup>353</sup>

During 1904–1905 Russia was engaged in a war with Japan which strained its relations with Britain. Britain also remained engaged in Africa as a result of the Boer War (1899–1902), and this also brought the risk of collision with Germany, which was moving closer to the Porte. These events, including the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that began in 1902, had an impact on relations between Britain and Russia and prevented close co-operation between all the Powers in creating and implementing a joint Balkan or Macedonian policy.<sup>354</sup> After the Ilinden Uprising no big revolt broke out in Macedonia and so the Powers were not forced to adopt a new policy. Therefore, nothing came out of the autonomy plan for Macedonia, a result which was in fact desired by the neighbours of Macedonia who wanted to carve up the area for themselves. In this respect, the British government continued to

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<sup>351</sup> Livianos, p. 47.

<sup>352</sup> G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperly, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, V. 5, The Near East: The Macedonian Problem and Annexation of Bosnia* (London, 1928), pp. 68-69.

<sup>353</sup> Lord Courtney of Penwith, ed., *Nationalism and the War in the Near East - by a Diplomatist* (Oxford: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1915), p. 91.

<sup>354</sup> Penwith, p. 104.

pressurise Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria to stop sending or continue supporting their bands, but their governments never officially admitted to being behind this activity.<sup>355</sup>

Co-operation between Macedonians and Albanians might have been a solution for Macedonia and was an option that Britain and the Powers should have supported. As seen in the previous chapter both Macedonians and Albanians, who probably together constituted the majority of the population in most areas, had worked closely together from the Ilinden Uprising until 1908 and after. On several occasions they asked Britain and the other Powers to acknowledge this co-operation.<sup>356</sup> Albanian-Macedonian cooperation was enlarged to include the will of the Vlachs and the Jews to create an autonomous Macedonia. This cooperation found support among some intellectuals in Britain who formed the London Macedonia Committee in 1913 which published its views in a newspaper called *Autonomy*.<sup>357</sup>—However, there was no recognition of their will by Britain or other Powers because the reform programme was designed to protect the Christians and not to promote inter-religious or inter-ethnic plans in Macedonia.

On the initiative of Austria-Hungary, the reform programme had excluded most of the *vilayet* of Kosovo and most other parts of Albania. Vienna believed that the Albanians would benefit from the reforms and this would disturb the existing balance between Albanians and Serbs. This made some of the Albanian leaders see Austria-Hungary as a protector of the Slavs, particularly the Serbs with whom Vienna had established a close relationship. For this reason, the Albanian leadership preferred British dominance over the reform programme and aimed to gain British sympathy or a protectorate over their cause.<sup>358</sup> In this respect Ismail Bey Qemali, an Albanian nationalist who we shall discuss in more detail below, wrote to Edward Grey in April 1908. He called on the British government to take action on the Albanian Question and organise a diplomatic conference

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<sup>355</sup> Livanius, p. 47.

<sup>356</sup> Маришлен Демири and Здравко Савески, *Национализмот во (н) контекст: соработка на Албанците и Македонците од Илинденското востание до Народноослободителната војна* (Скопје: Левичарско Движење Солидарност, 2014), Chapters 1 – 3.

<sup>357</sup> Ismet Dermaku, *Lidhjet shqiptaro-maqedone dhe çështja e reformave në Turqinë evropiane në fund të shek. XIX dhe në fillim të shek. XX*. (Prishtinë: Vjetari i Arkivit të Kosovës X-XI 1974-1975, 1978), pp. 63-9; See also: Hristo Andonov-Polanski, *Kontributi për lidhjet maqedono-shqiptare në të kaluarën* (Shkup: Jehona, 1967); Shukri Rahimi, *Komiteti i Lidhjes maqedono-shqiptare në Londër më 1902* (Prishtinë: Përparimi, 1962).

<sup>358</sup> Tokay, *Macedonian Question*, pp. 89-90.



in which the territorial integrity of Albania would be confirmed and recognised.<sup>359</sup> However, nothing came of Albanian efforts to win British support.

In Britain some interest was expressed regarding the railway and economic and political situation of the *vilayet* of Kosovo. Noel Buxton urged the British government, business community and the public to help the development of the Balkan railways. He acknowledged the importance that the Austrian railway had in being extended to the south to reach Greece. Buxton was particularly interested in helping Serbia to build railways and considered the scheme as both strategic and economic.<sup>360</sup> However, the British government did not intend to get involved in any projects in the Balkans. 'Our attitude towards the various railway projects in the Balkans should be neutrality' declared Grey, and added that British government would certainly not support rival projects.<sup>361</sup>

Buxton went on to report that the *vilayet* of Kosovo was very rich in minerals. He saw a necessity for British business to move in and exploit the rich mines of different minerals which were to be found there in considerable quantities. He also added that fresh discoveries of lodes were being made and called on the business community to follow the example of a British company which had started working in Kratova, Macedonia and which was soon to move to Kalkendelen (Tetova) and Prizren in Kosovo. He suggested that the British government, other Powers and the Porte should make changes regarding the political situation in Kosovo which would result in an acceptable business climate.<sup>362</sup>

Changes would indeed be made by the British government but not to the benefit of the populations of Albania or Macedonia, and not in the way that Durham and Buxton had called for. When Macedonia was discussed in the British Parliament in 1908, Edward Grey was criticised for doing far less than Lansdowne had done in 1903. Grey insisted that he was pursuing the policy of Lansdowne and had successfully acted on this matter in concert with the Powers. 'The utmost was obtained from it that could be obtained,' concluded Grey. He also confirmed that the British government continued to leave the initiative to

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<sup>359</sup> Letra e Ismail Qemalit dërguar Edward Grey-it, AQSH F. 19. D. 32/3, f. 432.

<sup>360</sup> Noel Buxton, 'Balkan Geography and Balkan Railways', *The Geographical Journal*, 32. 3 (1908), pp. 225- 232 (pp. 227-229).

<sup>361</sup> Grey to Lascalles, 24 February 1908, NA FO, 371/581.

<sup>362</sup> Buxton, pp. 230-233.

Austria-Hungary and Russia with regard to reforms in Macedonia.<sup>363</sup> Many members of the House were not happy with the 'Concert' and called for 'separate actions' in the form of intervention to be taken by the British government alone. Grey explained his policy:

That is an exceedingly complicated problem. In this country, to establish some kind of order under such exceedingly difficult conditions, it is not enough to take separate action; it will throw the whole thing into confusion. I am convinced of this – that if we were to take separate action in the Macedonian question, separate action, which means forcible action, the resort to force ourselves, we might begin with the Macedonian question, but nobody can say with what question such action as that might end. Therefore, I rule separate action out of the question, both because of the consequences it might have and because it could not be effective.<sup>364</sup>

What Grey did not say was that the British government was preparing an agreement with Russia. After being defeated by Japan in 1905, Russia returned to its earlier interests in the Balkans with Macedonia as the point of conflict. This raised tensions between Russia and Austria-Hungary.<sup>365</sup> In 1907 Britain and Russia concluded the Anglo-Russian Entente to settle their disputes in Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet.<sup>366</sup> As a consequence, this situation dictated another agreement between Britain and Russia which was finalised in June 1908, when King Edward VII and Tsar Nicholas II met in Reval and agreed to intervene in Constantinople with regard to administrative reforms. They aimed to fulfil the promise which was made by the Powers at the Congress of Berlin to the Christians of Macedonia.<sup>367</sup> In reality the agreement was designed to give a new lease to reforms in Macedonia, while the Powers were to guarantee the integrity of the *vilayets* of Manastir, Salonika and Kosovo and the reduction of Ottoman forces in Macedonia. A few days later, the Young Turk Revolution changed the whole situation.<sup>368</sup>

While the European Powers did not succeed in offering a solution for Macedonia and its inhabitants, who often were not sure to which ethnic group they belonged, nationalism,

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<sup>363</sup> Extract from the Times of 26 February 1908 in: NA, FO, 371/581, Section 2, Nr. 6758.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> Mark Mazower, *The Balkans – From the end of Byzantium to the Present Day* (London: Phoenix, 2001), p. 103.

<sup>366</sup> This agreement later led to the formation of the Triple Entente which was an association between Great Britain, Russia and France, the nucleus of the Allied Powers in World War I.

<sup>367</sup> Ernest Jackh, *The Rising Crescent – Turkey Yesterday Today and Tomorrow* (Farrar & Reinhart: New York, 1944), p. 90.

<sup>368</sup> Livianos, p. 47.

which itself came from Western Europe, developed its course.<sup>369</sup> The aggressive use of nationalism in Macedonia made the situation more difficult for all parties involved. The Macedonian problem was becoming more and more complicated and increasingly difficult for the Powers to solve. This had an effect particularly on the Albanians and produced two results: it contributed to the radicalisation of Albanian nationalism and hastened the Young Turk Revolution.

#### Creating and implementing a nationalist plan

During the nineteenth century Albanian intellectuals were divided into two groups: intellectuals who lived abroad and those who lived within the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Those who lived abroad contributed greatly to the development of the Albanian national ideology. They acted abroad because the Porte prohibited the use of the Albanian language, for example in administration, schools and print, and because they believed that the battle for the Albanian national cause was to be fought and won in the hearts and minds of Western European governments.<sup>370</sup> Most of these ideological writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century called for Albanian independence but because the Porte had banned the circulation of their writings in Albanian territories, their influence at home was extremely limited.

The second group of ideologists, such as the Frashëri brothers and Vaso Pasha (1825-1892), who lived within the territories of the Ottoman Empire and mainly in Constantinople, became more influential. Since they lived under very different circumstances from their fellow intellectuals at home and abroad, they developed a different approach to the future of Albania which foresaw the creation of an Albanian state in two stages: through initial autonomy leading to independence. To the Albanians in the territories of the Ottoman Empire this plan seemed more reasonable and therefore the views and plans of this group became widely accepted.

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<sup>369</sup> McCarthy, p. 42.

<sup>370</sup> Noel Malcolm, 'Myths of Albanian National Identity: Some Key Elements as Expressed in the Works of Albanian Writers in America in the early Twentieth Century, in *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, eds., by Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd Fischer (London: Hurst, 2002), p. 72.

In 1874 in Constantinople Sami Frashëri, known among non-Albanians as Şemseddin Sami, through his play, *Besa Yahud Ahde* ('Besa': Fulfilment of the pledge),<sup>371</sup> showed the public that Albanians and Albania were integral parts of the Ottoman polity. Yet, as Gawrych has noted, Frashëri also had a hidden agenda: he wanted to inspire ethnic pride among Albanians and encourage the development of Albanian consciousness during the era of Tanzimat,<sup>372</sup> and at a time when nationalist sentiments of other peoples in the Balkans were on the rise. His play also showed that Albanians maintained two distinct loyalties: devotion to the Empire and an ethnic attachment to Albania.<sup>373</sup>

A similar view was given five years later by Vaso Pasha, who was a friend of Sami Frashëri. Together they formed the Central Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the Albanian People in Constantinople in 1877. Vaso Pasha started his diplomatic career as a secretary in the British Consulate in Shkodra and later entered the Ottoman diplomatic service, being sent to the Ottoman Embassy at the Court of St. James in London. From 1882 until his death in 1892 he served as Governor of Lebanon, a position he was given because it was dictated by an international treaty that it should be given to a Catholic of Ottoman nationality but more because the Sultan wanted him away from Albanian activities in Constantinople. In his treatise, published in London in 1879, his view on Albania was shown to be similar to that which Frashëri expressed in his play. Despite giving a historical account, portraying Albanians as the most ancient people in the Balkans, he still saw the need for Albania to remain under Ottoman suzerainty and loyal to the Empire.<sup>374</sup>

The situation of the Albanians in Macedonia led Sami Frashëri, Vaso Pasha and other Albanian intellectuals to change their minds, as they saw no possibility for the Albanians to maintain loyalty to the Empire if this meant losing Albanian territories. Thus in 1899 Frashëri developed the concept of *Albanianism*, a term since used to describe Albanian

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<sup>371</sup> Sami Frashëri was known as a linguist, lexicographer, novelist and playwright, belonging to the highest elite of the Ottoman intelligentsia of the XIX century. His brother Naim (1846-1900) was also a well-known writer and poet. His older brother Abdyl (1839-1892), as we have seen earlier, was the most prominent member of the Albanian League. They came from a Bektashi family and became three of the strongest pillars of the Albanian nationalist movement. See further: Albert Doja, 'A Political History of Bektashism in Albania', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7. 1 (2006), pp. 83–107 (pp. 88-101) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14690760500477919>> [accessed on October 2015]; Nathalie Clayer, *Në fillimet e nacionalizmit shqiptar - lindja e një kombi me shumicë myslimane në Evropë* (Tiranë: Përpejka, 2012), pp. 428 – 445.

<sup>372</sup> Reform program that aimed to reorganise the Ottoman Empire. It began in 1839 and ended in 1876 with the introduction of the constitution.

<sup>373</sup> Gawrych, p. 11.

<sup>374</sup> Wassa Effendi, *The Truth on Albania and the Albanians* (London: National Press Agency, 1879), pp. 39-40.

nationalism in Albanian and Turkish historiography, as well as by some western scholars. In March 1899, Frashëri secretly completed a book written in Albanian and titled *Shqipëria - Ç'ka qënë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhetë?* (Albania – What it was, what it is and will become of it?). The book was smuggled to Bucharest to be published the same year but without the name of the author.<sup>375</sup> It was also published in Turkish, German, Italian and Greek. The publication of the book in multiple languages can be taken as a sign of the great interest that was shown by Albanians in the territories of the Ottoman Empire and in Europe about the content of the book. It became the very manifestation of Albanian nationalism and a revolutionary book in its contribution to changing the way Albanians regarded themselves and the Ottoman Empire.

Frashëri created a national identity myth by claiming that Albanians, being the descendants of Pelasgians, were the oldest people in Europe and gave as evidence the writings of earlier European historians and travel writers.<sup>376</sup> The aim of Frashëri was to present the Albanians as owners of the territories they inhabited by charting their ancient origin. He listed the ancient people of the Balkans (Illyrians, Dardanians, Epirots, Macedonians and Thracians) as being Pelasgians in origin and, therefore, Albanian.<sup>377</sup>

The third part of the book was the most important and radical in character. If the Albanians did not detach themselves from the collapsing Empire, they would perish with it, warned Frashëri. Even if the Empire somehow managed to survive, in a different form and with its territories curbed, it would mean death for Albania as the land would be divided between the Greeks and the Slavs. Frashëri also warned Albanians that Macedonia was soon to become an international problem and that they should make their voice heard in demanding their rights, as other peoples of the region had done. He went on to assure the Albanians that they were capable of governing and defending themselves, yet emphasised this did not mean that Albanians should rise against the Porte. He only warned that, if the Empire 'should be snuffed out, it must not take Albania with it to the grave'. He believed that Albanians had to unite and present their case to the Porte and the European Powers

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<sup>375</sup> Gawrych, p. 127.

<sup>376</sup> Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria - Ç'ka Qënë, ç'është E ç'do Të Bëhetë* (Tiranë: Mësonjëtorja e Parë, 1999), pp. 5-20.

<sup>377</sup> Bülent Bilmez, 'Shemseddin Sami Frashëri (1850-1904): Contributing to the Construction of Albanian and Turkish Identities' in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in South-Eastern Europe*, ed., by Diana Mishkova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), pp. 341-371 (p. 349).

and that the Sultan, willingly or unwillingly, would listen to and approve their demands. Meanwhile Europe would help, as it had helped other nations, to compel the Porte.<sup>378</sup>

Frashëri, being aware of events in Macedonia and elsewhere, predicted the fall of the Ottoman Empire and worked to develop the national identity of other ethnic groups, including the Turks. With the Macedonian problem coming to a head, Frashëri's belief in the Empire rapidly faded away and reached an all-time low in 1902, when the Sultan ordered the closure of the few Albanian schools which existed in Albania while schools of other ethnicities in Macedonia were flourishing. This caused Albanian political and cultural activity to go underground. As a *Tosk* of the south, he was occasionally frustrated with the *Gegs* of the north who were driven by their traditional conservatism or localism and who used their warlike instincts more often than he thought necessary and thus ignored the wider national interest. When he died in 1904 many Albanians viewed him as the father of Albanian nationalism while the supporters of Turkism regarded him as a Turkish nationalist.<sup>379</sup>

#### Nationalist, local and conservative leaders

Frashëri's desire to unite Albanian leaders under his programme was not fulfilled in the way that he wished. During his life and after his death, Albanian leaders could roughly be divided into three groups that followed three different paths. The first group were the nationalists who adopted Frashëri's ideas and Macedonia became their main concern. The second group of local leaders consisted of those who pursued regional or their own personal interests. Frashëri believed that they harmed the national idea and for this reason he disliked them. The third group, the most powerful one until 1908, were the conservatives who supported the Sultan's regime and did not favour any changes in the Empire. Macedonia was also their concern, but they viewed it as an Ottoman rather than solely Albanian problem. This division became apparent by the end of the nineteenth century when the Porte engaged around 150,000 troops to stabilise Macedonia and Albania. In 1898 the commander of the Ottoman Army in the *vilayet* of Kosovo, Marshall

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<sup>378</sup> Sami Bey Frashëri, *What will Become of Albania* <[http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts19\\_2/AH1899\\_1.html](http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts19_2/AH1899_1.html)> [accessed 9 August 2015].

<sup>379</sup> Gawrych, pp. 130-131.

Ethem Pasha, backed by the Ottoman government, presented to the Sultan 'The Project on Albania'.<sup>380</sup> The 'Project' was backed by Albanian conservative Pashas and some notables who were not concerned with Albanian national aspirations and saw no national future if excluded from the Empire. Among them was Esat (Essad) Pasha Toptani (1863-1920) who backed Ethem Pasha's 'Project' unreservedly. Another conservative notable and landowner, Syreja Bey Vlora, sent the Sultan a plan, suggesting even more drastic measures against the Albanians in the south and north.<sup>381</sup>

By supporting these drastic measures against Albania, the Albanian nationalists considered that Esat Pasha entered the scene on the wrong side. Esat Pasha came from a powerful family of landowners in central Albania. After 1908 he did not belong to any group of Albanian leaders but would support any idea or organisation if he saw personal gain in it. As we shall see, he became the most hated person among the Albanian nationalist leaders. Nevertheless, he somehow found ways of playing a key role in Albanian politics until 1920, when he was killed in Paris by a young Albanian nationalist called Avni Rrustemi.<sup>382</sup>

Ismail Bey Qemali was the best example of a liberal Ottoman politician and diplomat who had made a successful career and grew into an Albanian nationalist leader of that time.<sup>383</sup> Ismail Bey became popular among the Albanians and others in the ruling elite in Constantinople, but until around 1900 he was largely unknown among the masses in Albania.<sup>384</sup> In 1892 he handed a memorandum to the Sultan expressing his views on reforming the Empire. Regarding foreign politics, a field in which he excelled, he proposed to seek a special understanding with the British government to be finalised in a bilateral treaty. The Porte was to acknowledge Britain's special interest in the Mediterranean and assure the route to India. An 'Entente' with Britain, according to Ismail Bey, would stop Russia from advancing towards Constantinople and the Balkans.<sup>385</sup> He believed that the

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<sup>380</sup> Anamali and Prifti, p. 274. - The aim of the project was to alarm the Sultan about difficulties in the *Vilayet* of Kosovo and Manastir and to propose new measures for pacifying Albania. The complete disarmament of the Albanians and centralising power in the hands of the Sultan in Constantinople were the two main points. It was hoped these measures would prevent the formation of an autonomous Albania and its exclusion from the Empire.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> 'The Murder of Essad Pasha: Acquittal of the accused', *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 Dec, 1920 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/476429073?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 6 October 2016].

<sup>383</sup> Yusuf Sarıınay, Yıldırım Ağanoğlu, Sebahattin Bayram, Mümin Yıldıztaş, eds., *Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Arnavutluk - Shqipëria në Dokumentet Arkivale Otomane* (Istanbul: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2008), pp. 43-45.

<sup>384</sup> Frashëri, *The History of Albania*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>385</sup> Ismail Kemal, *The Memoirs* (London: Constable, 1920), pp. 214-216.

Balkan issue, and Macedonia within it, was a big concern for the Porte. With Russia out of the way, the Porte would be able to stabilise Macedonia by establishing 'an entente between the Balkan states' of Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro and creating a defensive alliance and economic accord. Then, ambiguously, he suggested that in the process, a kind of union or a federation between the Balkan countries and the Ottoman Empire could be created. He probably thought that such a union or federation would have absorbed the problem of Macedonia. With a strong Empire, with Britain on its side and Russia out of the way, the Porte 'could serve as the centre around which the Balkan states should be regrouped'.<sup>386</sup>

With this suggestion Ismail Bey probably aimed to solve the Macedonian and Albanian problems, although Albania was not mentioned at all in his memorandum. However, as he later pointed out, the Sultan 'never had the time to reflect on these projects and suggestions or to give practical solutions to them'. He added that a European power should have induced the Sultan to carry out such an important enterprise.<sup>387</sup> He did not mention which Power that should be, but he always favoured the involvement of Britain in the Balkans. For this reason, Ismail Bey was already labelled by Ottoman officials as being pro-British and the Sultan's disregard left him deeply unhappy.

The Sultan's answer on this matter came a few years later. Regarding the relationship with the British government, the Sultan explained his position in his memoirs. Writing about the 'ambitions of England' of 1899, he accused the British government of 'breaking the Ottoman authority' in Egypt and meddling further in territories such as Yemen.' He blamed the British press for being biased and regarded Gladstone's Liberal policy as a 'crusade against the Ottomans'. 'Gladstone', he added, 'was walking in the steps of Pope Pius II'.<sup>388</sup> With this attitude towards the British, the Sultan showed no intention of considering the ideas raised in Ismail Bey's proposal. In his memoirs, as in many talks he had with European diplomats, the Sultan avoided addressing the Albanian Question.

There was another event which made Ismail Bey distance himself further from the Sultan. Albanian businessmen and political leaders showed great interest in the project of Albanian

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid, p. 217.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid. p. 219.

<sup>388</sup> Sulltan Abdylhamiti, *Kujtime e mia nga politika* (Shkup: Logos A, 2010), pp. 121-135.



railways which was announced in 1892. They thought that the railway, which was to connect the Albanian coastal towns of Vlorë and Shkodra with the Albanian part of Macedonia, where the line already existed, would enable the movement of people and develop Albania economically. A British company was competing for concessions but the proposals were dropped by the Sultan.<sup>389</sup> Ismail Bey was involved in trying to win concessions for the portion from Manastir to his birthplace Vlorë, where he also had business interests and felt that he was deliberately deceived by the Powers and the Porte because of political and personal reasons. The political reason, he believed, was that the Powers and the Porte did not want to develop Albania. The second reason, the personal one, was that the Sultan, who was the 'owner of considerable property at Salonika as well as the port itself, was not in favour of a line that was likely to compete with Salonika.'<sup>390</sup>

By the end of 1899 Ismail Bey was convinced that the prospect of reforming the Empire and securing autonomy for Albania was practically non-existent. Therefore, he was left with one choice: to promote the case of autonomy or independence of Albania. Over the next two years he contacted important Albanian personalities in Constantinople and revealed his plan to them. As a matter of fact, his plan was more of a strategy of how to implement Frashëri's programme, which he planned to implement by visiting European governments and asking for their support for an autonomous or independent Albania. The plan also included winning the support of the Albanian diasporas in Europe and reorganising them.<sup>391</sup> At the end of March 1900, the Sultan, being suspicious of Ismail Bey's involvement in conspiracies, decided to send him as far away as possible from Constantinople. He called Ismail Bey and told him that he was appointed governor of Tripoli in Libya with a doubled salary.<sup>392</sup>

On 1 May 1900, against the Sultan's will but in agreement with the British Embassy, Ismail Bey boarded a Khedive<sup>393</sup> ship, flying under the British flag and left the Bosphorus for Europe in order to escape his new appointment. The Sultan asked his diplomatic representations to

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<sup>389</sup> Chermide to Ford, 22 March 1892, NA, FO, 78/4791, Nr. 1; Lane to Rosebery, 23 October 1893, NA, FO, 78/4791, Nr. 498.

<sup>390</sup> Kemal, pp. 187-188.

<sup>391</sup> See: Anamali and Prifti, p. 295: Ismail Bey revealed his plan in an interview given to Tribuna (an Italian Newspaper published in Rome) on 21 May 1900.

<sup>392</sup> Renzo Falaschi, ed., *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Vlorë and His Work for the Independence of Albania with Historical Notes and Supplements* (Tirana: Toena, 1997), p. 451.

<sup>393</sup> Albanian dynasty in Egypt established by Mehmet Ali Pasha.

block Ismail Bey's contacts with European governments and sent envoys to Albania to discredit him. A special mission against him in Albania was led by Esat Pasha and other Albanian conservatives, which backfired on the Porte, since Ismail Bey in fact became more popular among the masses who had previously known very little about him. Within a few months Ottoman diplomatic missions sent reports to Constantinople informing the government and the Sultan that Ismail Bey was 'scoring positive results in his mission on Albania in Europe'.<sup>394</sup>

Meanwhile, Albania became almost ungovernable due to the troubles which were created by local Albanian leaders. Their actions were derived from personal, local or regional interests, but had the potential to force Ottoman troops to relocate from troubled Macedonia deep into Albanian territories, a situation that neither the Porte nor the Powers wanted. Albanian rebellions of this nature appeared frequently in the south and the north. The most dangerous local leader who disturbed the region was Isa Boletini (1864-1916) who gave signs of rebelling against the Porte. Boletini was a controversial character, whose actions in the beginning were difficult to categorise as either brigandage, local or nationalist in character. However, he would go on to become one of the main leaders of the Albanian armed struggle for independence, organising his followers to reject the Porte's decision which allowed the opening of the Russian Consulate in Mitrovica.<sup>395</sup>

As a result of the ongoing problems in Macedonia, security issues continued to rise in Albania which further emphasised the need to address the Albanian Question. The Sultan still refused to acknowledge this reality. He took measures towards 'moulding Albanians into a pillar of Ottoman rule' based on Islamism. After he crushed all insurrections and closed the few existing Albanian schools, he decided to put Albanians, who remained loyal to him, in several high positions of power in Constantinople. This gave conservative Albanians the opportunity to gain more power. The Sultan thought that Ferid Pasha (1851-1914) was one such conservative and appointed him as Grand Vizier in January 1903. He hoped that in his new position of power Pasha would be able to stop the Albanian opposition to the reforms in Macedonia and improve their relations with the Porte.<sup>396</sup> Ferid

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<sup>394</sup> İsmail Kemal Bey'in Arnavutluk ve Avrupa'daki, Y. EE. 15, 21, 1318 R, 13, 1.

<sup>395</sup> Djemil Pasha to Tevfik Pasha, 19 November 1902, HR. SYS. 00118/28, 17.

<sup>396</sup> Ahsene Gül Tokay, 'Macedonian Reforms and Muslim Opposition during the Hamidian Era: 1878-1908', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 51-65 (p. 570) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09596410305258>> [accessed October 2015].

Pasha gave his word (Besa) to the Sultan that he would make sure the Albanians remained loyal to the Empire.<sup>397</sup> However, the Sultan had misjudged the political convictions of his Grand Vizier. Ferid Pasha cared for Albania more than the Sultan had wished or hoped. During his mandate, the Grand Vizier, favoured two other Albanians in his government, Tefik Pasha (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Turhan Pasha (Minister of Religious Estates) with whom he seemed to have shared a common cause on the future of Albania. At the same time Ferid Pasha suppressed Albanian conservatives, or at least stopped or delayed their promotions. Such a conservative was Hayredin Bey, Introducer of Ambassadors, whose promotion was stopped by the Grand Vizier. According to a British diplomatic report, Hayredin Bey denounced the 'Grand Vizier as a leader of the Albanian nationalist movement'.<sup>398</sup> Considering this case, we may conclude that there were tensions between Albanian nationalists and conservatives in the Ottoman government and probably also in the Palace.

Tensions between Albanian conservatives and nationalists in Macedonia and Kosovo had also risen and become more public two years earlier when in 1901 the Sultan had appointed General Shemsi Pasha, another conservative Albanian from the region of Peja, as a commander of the army in Kosovo. His duty was to act as the Sultan's trouble-shooter and guard the entry from the northern border with Serbia and Austria-Hungary into Kosovo. He was a darling of the Palace in Constantinople and so Albanian nationalists, as well as army officers from the Young Turk ranks, hated him. While he was able to restore some peace, he could not rule the part of Kosovo which remained under the control of local leaders.<sup>399</sup>

Where Shemsi Pasha did not succeed with arms, the Sultan helped with money and rewards and had given military posts to emerging leaders like Riza Bey and Bajram Curri. The Sultan also had a plan for Isa Boletini who proved able to mobilise the masses. In 1902 Boletini, under the pretext of stopping a Russian and Austro-Hungarian invasion, organised 5000 armed men and threatened the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar. He also proved decisive in stopping the opening of the Russian Consulate in Mitrovica. Seeing the danger, the Sultan

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<sup>397</sup> Gawrych, p. 132.

<sup>398</sup> Gooch and Temperly, *Vol. V*, pp. 1-32.

<sup>399</sup> Anamali and Prifti, p. 307.

managed, through Shemsi Pasha, to persuade Boletini to leave Kosovo for Constantinople where the post of commanding officer in the Albanian Guard was given to him.<sup>400</sup>

However, these measures did not prove sufficient to bring lasting peace and order. Boletini left behind a fear of invasion among Albanians and the idea of rejecting the Russian Consulate. Other nationalist leaders, who regarded Russia as their main enemy, took the decision to kill the Russian Consul, Grigorije Stepanovič Šcerbin.<sup>401</sup> In March 1903, thousands of armed Albanians entered Mitrovica to attack the Russian Consulate, clashing with the Ottoman army. On 18 March one of the Ottoman soldiers, an Albanian conscript, shot the consul who died ten days later.<sup>402</sup>

This was a big blow for the Porte which had tried to bring peace and offer security in the region. It also contributed to further worsening the relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, who saw the Russian Consul as their protector. A few months later, on 8 August 1903, another Albanian Ottoman soldier killed Aleksandar Arkadievich Rostkovski, the Russian Consul in Macedonia based in Manastir. Although not initially intended as a political murder, the event had highly political consequences.<sup>403</sup> Russia demanded and got an apology and reparations from the Porte. Russia used this case to portray the Albanians as troublemakers and anti-Christian. However, the Porte and Albanian nationalists were worried about the chaotic situation which engulfed most of Macedonia and Albania. Many Ottoman army officers, as well as Albanian nationalists, were convinced that the present regime was not able to deal with such problems and therefore began to seek a new form of organisation which would change the regime in Constantinople. Such an organisation was the Young Turk movement which attracted the support of Albanian nationalists and some of the local leaders, while conservatives continued to support the regime of the Sultan.

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<sup>400</sup> Jusuf Osmani, *Vrasja e konsullit rus Shqerbinit më 1903 në Mitrovicë sipas burimeve arkivore* (Prishtinë: Vjetari XXVII - XXVIII, 2002), pp. 177-178.

<sup>401</sup> *Koleksioni i Aleksandar Bukvičit*, viti 1902, Nr. 20.

<sup>402</sup> Osmani, p. 185.

<sup>403</sup> Shahin Kolonja, 'Një pui e re në Maqedoni', *Gazeta Drita*, 23 Shkurt 1904, Nr. 39, p. 3; Duncan M. Perry, 'Death of a Russian Consul: Macedonia 1903', *Russian History* 7. 1 (1980), pp. 201-211 (p. 209).

## The birth of the Young Turks

In early April 1896 British diplomatic reports from Constantinople spoke about signs of dissatisfaction that parts of Ottoman society expressed against the autocratic regime of the Sultan. 'From the peasants to the Palace' and within all classes, including the military and the navy, dissatisfaction almost went public. There were different organisations working in favour of spreading agitation for a liberal government but one important organisation was formed three years after the British diplomatic reports.<sup>404</sup>

Young Army cadets were attracted by western political ideas and secretly debated the possibility of applying them in their country. In May 1889 a group of four students of the Military Medical College in Constantinople, among them Ibrahim Temo, an Albanian from Macedonia, gathered to form a clandestine organisation aiming to depose the Sultan. The organisation was named *Ittihat Osmanli Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Union Society).<sup>405</sup> Within a short time the group was rapidly enlarged with members from other schools, bureaucratic institutions and the military. Members were organised in secret cells and identified with personal numbers. Ibrahim Temo took the number 1/1, meaning that he was the first founding member or "Young Turk number one" and was to play a leading role in the future of the organisation.<sup>406</sup>

The organisation, later named the Young Turks by the European Press, aimed to reinstate the constitution, centralise governmental power and unify the Empire under strong Ottoman nationalism. This was contrary to what the majority of Albanians wanted, with the promise of schools in the Albanian language the only appealing element that the Young Turks were offering.<sup>407</sup> However, many Albanian personalities with nationalistic backgrounds and many army officers saw the Young Turk organisation as a way of advancing their national cause and joined the movement without much hesitation. Temo, avoiding arrest, escaped to Romania and there he worked with Nikolla Naço (1843 - 1913) to include among the Young Turk Movement their fellow Albanians already active in secret nationalist organisations. Temo managed to recruit Nexhip Draga (1867 – 1920), a member

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<sup>404</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 19*, p. 145.

<sup>405</sup> Psilos, *The Young Turk Revolution*, p. 13.

<sup>406</sup> Bilgin Çelik, 'Romanya'da Bir Jön Türk: Ibrahim (Ethem) Temo ve Romanya'daki Faaliyetleri', *International Journal of History, History Studies*, 2. 2 (2010), pp. 257-367 (p. 259)  
<http://www.historystudies.net/english/DergiTamDetay.aspx?ID=103&Detay=Ozet> [accessed 29 July 2015].

<sup>407</sup> Malcolm, Kosovo, p. 236.

of an influential Albanian family in Mitrovica. Local Young Turk committees sprang up in many towns in Macedonia and Kosovo among the population and in army garrisons and by 1908 were dominated by Albanians. As Malcolm notes, 'Kosovo should have been a bulwark against the Young Turks' but in reality the Albanians of Macedonia and Kosovo played the 'main role in bringing them to power'.<sup>408</sup>

Nationalist Albanians also played an important role among the Young Turk societies in exile. Ismail Bey was among the most prominent members in the Congress which was held in Paris in 1902, organised by Prince Sabahudin, to unite the various Young Turk factions.<sup>409</sup> Ismail Bey proposed making a plea to the Powers for intervention but many Young Turks disagreed with Ismail Bey and told him that foreign powers were the greatest enemy of the Ottomans and seeking help from them 'is not an honour but a disgrace'. They argued that he was opening a way for the European imperialist designs to move and occupy territories of the Empire.<sup>410</sup> Nevertheless, the Albanian national cause was such an issue among the Young Turks in exile that the Porte used these facts to declare that Dahmad Mahmud Pasha and his sons were supporting the Albanian nationalist movement. This prompted Dahmad Pasha to deny these claims and affirmed his disapproval with the ideas of autonomy or independence for Albania.<sup>411</sup>

At that time, it became obvious that Ismail Bey was not in a position to lead Albanians abroad, as both the Young Turks and Albanian nationalists considered him to be pro-British and pro-Greek. He was also seen as favouring a diplomatic solution leading to the independence of Albania which was a slow process and, as such, rejected by many who favoured a guerrilla war against the Porte. The Greek members from Macedonia and other parts of the Ottoman Empire were also against Ismail Bey, as they did not like his ideas of foreign intervention and an independent Albania.<sup>412</sup>

Regarding foreign assistance, Prince Sabahudin and Ismail Bey decided to involve the British government in the plans to dethrone the Sultan. Ismail Bey acted by using his diplomatic experience and the ties he had established during his career with British diplomats and the

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Prince Sabahudin was a nephew of the Sultan who had joined the movement in 1899 along with his brother Lütfullah Bey and his father Damad Mahmud Pasha.

<sup>410</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford University Press: 1995), pp. 187- 188.

<sup>411</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, pp. 15-16.

Foreign Office. For their part, the British could have had reasons to endorse an attempted coup *d'état*. The Foreign Office was losing the influence it once exercised over the Porte while Germany was winning it. The Sultan had given the Baghdad railway concessions to the Germans and the British did their utmost to block this scheme during 1902 and 1903.<sup>413</sup> However, Ismail Bey's attempt to secure British backing and bring radical change in the Ottoman system of government proved unsuccessful because the British refused to get involved.<sup>414</sup> The failure of executing a *coup d'état* caused the authority of Sabahudin and Ismail Bey to fade among their supporters. It was for this reason that Ismail Bey decided to distance himself from the Young Turks and showed more consideration for the case of the future of Albania.

The Congress of Paris in 1902 also showed that the Young Turks and Albanian nationalists in exile were more an intellectual than a political organisation. They had not established strong connections with the organisations and the people within the territories of the Empire. The revolution was brewing in Macedonia and exiled Young Turks, among them Albanian nationalists, were out of touch with the situation on the ground. However Albanian nationalists and army officers, who had joined the Young Turks in Macedonia and Kosovo, were better placed to change the situation.

#### The Young Turk Revolution: an Albanian tale of three cities

The development of the Young Turk Revolution is, to a considerable extent, an Albanian tale involving three cities: Salonika, Manastir and Ferizaj. The revolution was born, developed and erupted in these three places, which were culturally and strategically important for the Ottoman Empire in Europe.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the multi-ethnic city of Salonika became a centre of plotting against the rule of the Sultan. A branch of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) had existed in Salonika since 1896, but the city was only to become more important a decade later. The transfer of the central CUP to Salonika in 1906 and its unification with the Paris branch a year later, made the port city into a breeding ground for the revolution. The

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<sup>413</sup> See further details about the coup *d'état* attempt in: Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, pp. 20–24.

<sup>414</sup> Alexander Lyon Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1923* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 18.

support of the population for the CUP was strong and was seen as a joint Jewish–Muslim movement. The Muslim middle class and part of the aristocracy, together with Jewish intellectuals and businessmen, gave the movement a high level of political power.<sup>415</sup>

The Albanian population of Salonika was significantly lower in comparison with the Jewish majority and those who were known as Muslims or Turks, but their influence in the army was important. Many of the army officers and important personalities from the civil administration were also organised in free masonic lodges and planned to achieve their goals by removing the Sultan from power and bringing back the constitution.<sup>416</sup> Dissatisfaction was growing among the officers of the Third Army, stationed in Salonika. The Empire, which had lost vast territories following the Congress of Berlin, was now about to lose Macedonia. Enver Bey (1881-1922), an Albanian officer, was among many officers who were worried about the Empire whose fate was intertwined with that of Albania. Enver Bey played an important role in the movement and ultimately became the most famous Young Turk of all.<sup>417</sup> Another active army officer of Albanian origin was Salonika-born Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938).<sup>418</sup> However, Mustafa Kemal did not show much regard for the Albanian cause, but rather went on to become *Atatürk*, the father of the Turkish Nation.

The activities of the Young Turks in Salonika were intensive, but the revolution could not break out in this city. In 1903 a group of Young Turks told Richard Graves, the British Consul in Salonika, that they would be leading a revolt against the Sultan and asked for British support. The consul told them that if they had no support from the army and the police they should forget about such a revolt.<sup>419</sup> The consul was right. Salonika could feed the Young Turk movement but could not start the revolution.

Manastir was another multi-ethnic and multi-religious city, situated further north in Macedonia, which offered better conditions for the outbreak of the revolution. In Manastir

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<sup>415</sup> Penwith, pp. 111 - 112.

<sup>416</sup> Şükrü Hanioglu, 'Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons 1875 – 1908', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25. 2 (1989), pp. 186-197 (p. 191) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283298>> [accessed 15 October 2015]; Jackh, p. 92.

<sup>417</sup> Mazower, *Salonica*, p. 272.

<sup>418</sup> Andrew Mango, *Atatürk – the Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2002), p. 27; Jackh, p. 31; Ian Brundskill, ed., *Great military lives – A Century in Obituaries: Atatürk* (London: Times books, 2005), pp. 175-186. Mango and Jackh have maintained that one of the parents of Atatürk was Albanian. The Obituary published by *The Times* on 11 November 1939 suggested that both parents may have been Albanian.

<sup>419</sup> Tokay, *Macedonian Question*, p. 207.



the army, the police and, to a degree, the administration, were three important institutions in which the Albanians had considerable influence and some control. The existing Albanian guerrilla bands and the local Albanian population were two valuable elements that the revolution needed. The Sultan believed that too many Albanian soldiers could be dangerous if left to serve in Macedonia or Albania, as there were signs that they may be used by the Albanian nationalists for their own ends. Therefore, he wanted to change the Albanian composition in the army and so in 1905 ordered parts of the 11<sup>th</sup> brigade of Janina and a battalion of Prevesa, dominated by Albanian soldiers, to be sent to Yemen. Even after this move the rest of the army in Macedonia still consisted of a high number of Albanian soldiers which were known to be disobedient if they did not fight under Albanian command. They also refused to fight in Albanian areas. For this reason, Hairi Pasha, commander of the Third Army, did not want Albanian battalions in Macedonia and complained that Albanian soldiers were too anti-Christian to be suitable for intervention in Macedonia. He asked the Porte to move the remaining Albanian soldiers elsewhere but his request was denied.<sup>420</sup>

While the discipline and morale of the Ottoman army was low, the activities of the Young Turk officers increased. Albanians dominated the ranks of the Young Turk officers. Among them was Nijazi Bey (1873 – 1913) of Resna, Macedonia, who became as prominent as Enver Bey and together became two of the main heroes of the revolution. Two other important personalities, Muzahir Bey, the brother of Nijazi Bey and Nedim Bey were also active in spreading Young Turk ideas among the population in the area of Manastir. Ejup Sabri, another Albanian, was a commander of the *Redif* battalion and had enormous influence over the Albanian population of Ohri, which was his native town.

At the same time the Albanian nationalist movement, mainly directed against Greece and Serbia, was growing rapidly in the *vilayet* of Manastir.<sup>421</sup> The Ottoman authorities were aware of this movement but on many occasions tolerated it because Albanian nationalism, in the circumstances of Macedonia, was often in favour of the Porte. Nijazi Bey and his followers therefore tried to win over the Albanian nationalist guerrilla bands which were formed in response to the difficult situation in Macedonia. Although initially they were

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid, pp. 159-160.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid, pp. 234–239.

formed for the defence of their national rights and as counter force to the other bands operating in Macedonia that attacked Albanians, they later fought against the Ottoman regime. The Committee for the Liberation of Albania was formed in Manastir in 1906 by Halil Bey, Georgi Qiriasi, Fehim Bey Zavalani and Bajo Topulli. All were from different parts of south Albania and developed a network which spread from south to north. The Committee was especially successful in Kosovo where they recruited some influential people, and while in Gjakova they founded a branch with the same name.<sup>422</sup>

The increased activities of the Albanian nationalist movement were noticed by British diplomats. As seen earlier, in a report for 1907, regarding the cooperation between the Albanian national movement and the Young Turks, the British Embassy in Constantinople observed that the Albanian nationalist movement was very active and was on the rise.<sup>423</sup> By the beginning of 1908 Nijazi Bey, with the help of Galip Bey, the commander of Skopje garrison, managed to get the support of most Albanian nationalist leaders and members of their movement. Before June 1908 it was believed that in Kosovo two thirds of the officers in the army and the gendarmerie had become members of the Young Turk movement.<sup>424</sup> This meant that almost the entire Albanian nationalist movement in Macedonia and Kosovo, as well as the majority of Albanian army officers, joined the Young Turks.

As the British and Russian monarchs discussed the question of Macedonia at their meeting in Reval on 9 June 1908, tensions were increasing among Albanians in the *vilayets* of Kosovo and Manastir. Nationalist Albanians felt that their national question was ignored and other foreign powers were about to move in.<sup>425</sup> Here, the Young Turks and the Albanians had a strong common interest as both wanted to save the territory of the Empire. The Reval Agreement gave the signal for the revolution. On 3 July 1908 Nijazi Bey, accompanied by some Ottoman officials and a few soldiers, most of them Albanian, proceeded to the mountains. There he joined other companies and formed a Young Turk band which numbered 100 to 200 members.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, pp. 206-209.

<sup>423</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, p. 290.

<sup>424</sup> Tokay, *Macedonian Reforms*, p. 61.

<sup>425</sup> Clayer, pp. 547-548.

<sup>426</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 19*, p. 490.

In their reports the British diplomats did not give much weight to this event which, within a few days, sparked great changes. The first report about the event was dispatched from Manastir to Constantinople on 5 July and reached the British Foreign Office on 8 July. A day later, the report was read by Hardinge, the under-secretary, and Grey, but they saw no importance in it. More reports arrived on 14 July but they were ignored once again. One of the reports from early July said that an Ottoman army officer told British diplomats that the revolutionary movement would break out in the course of a day or two and wanted to know the British attitude towards the Young Turks. The British vice-council, Heathcote, refused to discuss the issue.<sup>427</sup> By 18 July the Foreign Office started considering whether the movement would stop or spread. It was only around the end of July that they realised the progress made by the Young Turks was resembling a revolution.<sup>428</sup>

While British diplomats failed to recognise the signs of the revolution in time, the Porte was alarmed immediately and ordered Shemsi Pasha to proceed from Kosovo to Macedonia and deal with the insurgents. Shemsi Pasha, with a contingent of 3000 Albanian soldiers, arrived in Manastir on 6 July. Upon their arrival, the Albanian soldiers declared openly that they would not fire on the Young Turks, whom they viewed as Albanians. Pasha found himself in a very difficult position and asked the Sultan to activate those conservative Albanians to whom he had long given privileges. He thought it was about time they should put their weight against Young Turk officers.<sup>429</sup> Shemsi Pasha was killed the same day while Albanian bodyguards offered little or no protection and the assassin escaped and was never caught.<sup>430</sup> This prompted suspicions of an Albanian plot executed against Shemsi Pasha by those nationalists who had hated him so much and who had now become Young Turks.

A week later, in Manastir, an attempt was made by an Albanian on the life of Sadik Pasha, the Sultan's *aide-de-camp*, who was believed to have come to Macedonia on a spying mission. Three days earlier a 'regimental mufti' was also killed by Albanians in Salonika.<sup>431</sup> On 17 July, major-general Osman Hidayet was severely wounded while reading a telegram from the Sultan to the officers in the barracks in Manastir. Niazi Bey issued a proclamation:

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<sup>427</sup> *Ibid*, p. 491.

<sup>428</sup> Joseph Heller, *British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire 1908 – 1914* (Routledge: London, 2014), p. 9.

<sup>429</sup> Gawrych, p. 151.

<sup>430</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 19*, pp. 492-493.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid*, p. 491.

'The object of the rising is to revive the 1876 Constitution'. The Porte realised that this was a very dangerous movement as it had engulfed the army. The British Consul in Manastir wrote that majority of the officers of the Third Army were in 'favour of the Young Turks movement, and fully resolved to do their utmost for the realization of its objects.'<sup>432</sup>

The movement in the *vilayet* of Manastir reached wide proportions but it was still a military rebellion and could not be complete without the participation of the people. This happened further north of Manastir, in Ferizaj, Kosovo, just outside the borders of Macedonia. Salonika and Manastir were old cities, ethnically and religiously mixed, while Ferizaj was a small and relatively new town, almost entirely inhabited by Albanians. The town grew fast after 1874 when the railway line began to pass through it and a station was built. The railway came from Salonika, via Manastir and Skopje and continued to end in Mitrovica where Austria-Hungary aspired to build links from Bosnia in order to reach the port of Salonika.

In spring 1908 Austria-Hungary initiated the old plan of extending the railway from Bosnia to Mitrovica in Kosovo, while the Serbian government announced plans to build a railway to reach the coast of Albania through Kosovo. Albanian leaders viewed these initiatives with hostility. At the beginning of July rumours spread fast throughout Kosovo (probably by Serb agitators and Young Turks) that Austria-Hungary was about to invade.<sup>433</sup> When it was announced that a special train, bringing students of the Austrian-German railway training school from Skopje would arrive, people started gathering in Ferizaj, thinking that that was the first step of an Austro-Hungarian invasion. On 5 July a large crowd of Albanians gathered in Ferizaj to protest.<sup>434</sup> Although initially there were some 5000 armed men gathered by 23 July the number grew to 30,000.<sup>435</sup> This event was not linked with the insurrection in Manastir, which had started at the same time but created the effect which was aimed in Manastir.

Albanian leaders hurried to Ferizaj to hold an assembly which lasted more than two weeks. Among them was Isa Boletini, who had come back from Constantinople in March 1906 and

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<sup>432</sup> *Ibid*, p. 492.

<sup>433</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 237.

<sup>434</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 19*, pp. 497-498 - Barclay to Grey, 11 July 1908, Nr. 40.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid*, p. 497: Barclay reported that there were 10, 000 men gathered by 16 July while the number went to 30 000 by 24 July: See Malcolm, p. 237.

had been awarded the title of Bey and given land in Kosovo by the Sultan. Within two years, Isa Bey had become powerful and changed from a local leader to a conservative opposed to the Young Turks.<sup>436</sup> He left the meeting when he realised that his proposals would not pass. The meeting was also attended by Young Turks such as Nexhip Draga and Bajram Curri (1862 – 1925). Although initially they were in the minority, this composition would soon change in favour of the Young Turks.

Galib Bey, the Albanian commander of the Ottoman troops in Skopje, received orders from Constantinople to disperse the Albanians in Ferizaj. He was happy to receive the order but would not execute it. Galip Bey, being a Young Turk, went to Ferizaj with his army to take part in the assembly and to push forward Young Turk proposals.<sup>437</sup> He was accompanied by other Albanian members of the Skopje branch such as Colonel Vasfi Bey and Salih Bey. A number of respected and popular personalities from Prishtina, including Haxhi Shabani and Sherif Efendi, also joined him.<sup>438</sup>

More Albanian leaders and military personnel who were members of the Young Turk local committees from the region, rushed to Ferizaj. They felt that this opportunity was simply perfect to initiate changes and come to power. Leaders of Albanian guerrilla groups also supported them. On 18 July the Young Turks, predominantly consisting of Albanian nationalists, outnumbered conservative Albanians who favoured different decisions.<sup>439</sup> This created high tensions in the mosque where the meeting of the leaders of the two parties was held. Eventually, on 20 July, all the Albanian leaders decided to support the Young Turks,<sup>440</sup> but only after the Young Turks promised that, once in power, they would implement a programme of Albanian language in schools. The Young Turks promised many more national rights, including privileges the Albanians had enjoyed before and for a long time. Then, the Kosovo leaders addressed the masses, telling them they had achieved all their objectives including the 'abolition of prisons, the cancellation of all innovations and reforms'.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Isa Boletinaz, HR.SYS. 00118/28.

<sup>437</sup> Pears, p. 255.

<sup>438</sup> Tokay, *Macedonian Question*, p. 52.

<sup>439</sup> Ramiz Abdyl, *Lëvizja kombëtare shqiptare, 1908-1910, Vol.1* (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2004), p. 30.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, pp. 237-238.

After receiving the support of the masses, the Young Turks sent a telegram to Constantinople asking the Sultan to reinstate the constitution. The Sultan did not reply as he was busy taking steps to consolidate his power. A few days earlier he had ordered his Grand Vizier, Ferid Pasha, to act against the Albanians and calm the situation in Kosovo and Macedonia. The Pasha told the Sultan that this was not the duty of the Grand Vizier and resigned on the evening of 22 July.<sup>442</sup> The Albanian Grand Vizier could not keep his *Besa* as he 'failed' to maintain the Albanians' loyalty to the Sultan. Austro-Hungarian diplomats in Constantinople also observed the Grand Vizier's support for the Albanian nationalist movement in Macedonia.<sup>443</sup>

As the Sultan did not respond to the first telegram, another was sent on 22 July. This time the Sultan was threatened. He was told that 30,000 armed Albanians would be joined by more Albanians in Macedonia and Ottoman troops stationed in Manastir and Salonika, and together they would march to Constantinople. The Sultan gathered the Council of Ministers and discussed the issue in long and difficult meetings. Some of the ministers and advisers suggested 'half measures,' but the majority succeeded in persuading the Sultan that resistance would be useless since movements like the one in Ferizaj were expected elsewhere in the Empire and in other sections of the army. Describing the moment the decision was taken, the British ambassador wrote that 'the fact that the Albanians had declared themselves in favour of the Constitution, made the Sultan listen to counsels of moderation'.<sup>444</sup>

At midnight on 23/24 July 1908, the Sultan issued an *irade* (imperial decision) approving the constitution and allowing the formation of an Ottoman Parliament.

Unprecedented jubilation followed all over Albania and in Manastir a military parade was organised. Nijazi Bey entered the town triumphantly, together with Çerçiz Topulli, the Albanian guerrilla leader and Apostol Mihajlovski, a Macedonian guerrilla leader to symbolise the Albanian-Macedonian co-operation in the revolution.<sup>445</sup> The city of Salonika was illuminated and received with 'wildest enthusiasm' Enver Bey, who had gone north to Macedonia to organise Young Turk bands and now returned in triumph. He addressed a

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<sup>442</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 19*, p. 499; Pears, p. 235.

<sup>443</sup> Tokay, *Macedonian Question*, p. 251.

<sup>444</sup> Barclay to Grey, 28 July 1908, NA, CAB, 37/95, Nr. 1.

<sup>445</sup> Abdyli, *Libri 1*, p. 35.

large crowd, telling them 'we are all brothers'. Europe no longer had a mandate over the Ottoman Empire and the state no longer belonged to the Sultan but to its citizens, he told the cheering crowd.<sup>446</sup> However, within a few months joy turned into huge disappointment for the Albanians and other ethnicities in Macedonia who had believed in the Young Turk promises and in the revolution. To the Albanians, the Young Turks never fulfilled the promises they made at Ferizaj.

### Conclusion

After the Congress of Berlin, the British government showed little interest in Albania. The Foreign Office had no separate policy towards Albania and reacted only when events with broader implications occurred. In general, British interest in the Balkans also remained low. This attitude started to change slowly with the appearance of the Macedonian crisis and after pressure from the public and the press grew steadily. The British government acknowledged that the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Russia had more interests in the Balkans but wanted their involvement and influence in the Balkans and in Constantinople to be limited.

Although the British government supported the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, Albanian leaders still attempted to win British support. The Macedonian crisis also played an important role in the development of Albanian nationalism. As a result of the situation in Macedonia, Albanian ideologists developed the idea of Albanian nationalism while their nationalist leaders, seeking to find a solution to their question, joined the Young Turks and played a decisive role in the formation of this organisation and the events that led to the revolution.

The Young Turk programme had two common points with the Albanian national programme: the introduction of the Albanian language and the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. These commonalities convinced most of the Albanian nationalist leaders to join the Young Turks as a means of achieving their national aims. However, a considerable number of Albanian nationalists who lived abroad stayed

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<sup>446</sup> Mazower, *Salonica*, p. 275.

away and viewed the movement with great suspicion. Conservatives, who supported the Sultan's regime, were opposed to the Young Turks. Albanian leaders were frustrated with not being able to gain international or British support for their cause, which fed into their decision to support the Young Turk Movement. Whenever the Albanians became worried about the future of the Ottoman Empire, they turned to the British for support. Here there is a clear situation in which support from the British was not forthcoming, leading the Albanian nationalists to turn towards trying to bring about changes within the Empire.

The Young Turk Revolution brought back the 1876 constitution and the Ottoman Parliament. Britain and the Powers hoped that the changes in Constantinople would create a positive effect in Macedonia. The hopes of the Albanian leaders to resolve their national question through the democratic process was also high.



## Chapter V

### Language, Nationalism and Counter-Revolution, 1908-1910

*I cannot help being impressed by the decision, purpose and discipline, and strength which have characterised the [Young Turk] leaders of the Army which is now in power. It is clear that we have greatly underestimated the strength of the force at the disposal of the Committee. No doubt they have made plenty of mistakes. But it seems clear to me that the best elements in Turkey are on their side, and we must back up those elements and be sympathetic to them [...] I should like you to do everything in your power to keep in touch with the best men and to retain their confidence.* – Edward Grey.<sup>447</sup>

*I am an Albanian. This is the most important fact in my life. It is more important than my family because the conscience of this fact had awoken within me ideas, it taught me what to do and gave me the meaning of life.* – Sevasti Qiriazhi, Director of the School for Girls in Korça.<sup>448</sup>

## Introduction

This chapter has two objectives. The first objective is to analyse British foreign policy towards the Porte between 1908 and 1910 and to argue that the British government and the press fully supported the Young Turks and, in the process, disregarded the Albanian Question.

During the period under discussion, the British government continued to regard the Albanian Question as part of the Eastern Question. After the Young Turk Revolution of

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<sup>447</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, pp. 319-320.

<sup>448</sup> Suela Kastrati and Zenel Anxhaku, *Lisi i Artë* (Tiranë: Jetëshkrime, 2006), p. 27.

1908, the British government made efforts to improve its position in Constantinople which had been weakened in the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin. The Young Turks brought changes in Ottoman politics that initially won them sympathy and support among British politicians and the press. The British hoped that the new regime of the Young Turks would solve the problem of Macedonia, in which the British government had been engaged for a long time but with no apparent success. The British also hoped to regain their influence in the Ottoman Empire, which had been surpassed by the Germans. Yet at the same time, the change of regime as a result of the reinstatement of the constitution also raised concerns for the British, who were not sure how this would impact upon their Muslim dominions in India and Egypt.

The second objective is to assess the unification of the Albanian alphabet and to argue that language played a pivotal part in the Albanian national movement during this period. Furthermore, it will be suggested that language was the cause of the sudden conflict that arose between Albanian nationalists and the Young Turks after the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution, which led to the counter-revolution of April 1909. The second part of this chapter will also assess the support of the British and the Foreign Bible Society for the Albanian language and nationalism, arguing that this factor was crucial to its development.

The conflict between Albanian nationalists and the Young Turks will also be analysed through the relationship between the two parties. When the Young Turks began to depart from Ottomanism by introducing the idea of Turkism, this quickly brought them into confrontation, and later armed conflict, with the Albanian nationalists. As a result of this change in ideology, the Albanian leaders were quickly disappointed with the Young Turks.

The following analysis of British involvement in the Albanian Question as part of the Young Turk question has so far been overlooked. In all studies or publications, relations between the Albanians and the Young Turks are explained as a struggle of the Albanians against the Ottoman Empire, thus ignoring the role of Turkish nationalism. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to explain the ideological clash and the armed conflict of the Albanians with the Young Turks as a confrontation between two nationalisms. So far, the role of language in

the Albanian national movement has not been acknowledged as a main element in the process of building the Albanian nation.

#### British policy towards the Young Turks, 1908 – 1910

With the departure of Disraeli and his pro-Ottoman policies in 1880, relations between Britain and the Porte had worsened. The new British Liberal policy, which was introduced by Gladstone, was considered by the Porte as unfavourable towards the Balkans. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Macedonian question had caused further deterioration in relations between Britain and the Porte. During this period the Sultan was attracted by the ascendancy of Germany and its growing economic and military power, thus giving the German government an opportunity to replace British influence in Constantinople. At the beginning of 1908 there was no hope that the Anglo-Ottoman relationship would improve soon. About a month before the Young Turk Revolution took place, Gerald Fitzmaurice<sup>449</sup> sent a private letter to Edward Grey's private secretary, William Tyrell, to explain the British policy in Constantinople. He wrote:

During the last few years our policy, if I may so call it, in Turkey has been, and for some time to come will be, to attempt the impossible task of furthering our commercial interests while pursuing a course (in Macedonia, Armenia, Turco-Persian Boundary &c.) which the Sultan interprets as being pre-eminently hostile in aim and tendency. In a highly centralised theocracy like the Sultanate and caliphate combined, with its pre-economic conceptions, every big trade &c. concessions - is regarded as an Imperial favour to be bestowed on the seemingly friendly, a category in which, needless to say, we are not included.<sup>450</sup>

Fitzmaurice believed that the Porte's attitude would not change before the death of the Sultan or a change in the regime, which would come as a result of some unforeseen troubles that could 'spell disaster to British interests and prestige.'<sup>451</sup> But, significant changes arrived within a few weeks, not years. When the Young Turks triumphed, the

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<sup>449</sup> Gerald Fitzmaurice (1865–1939) was the Chief Dragoman of the British Embassy in Constantinople. He had enormous influence over the Foreign Office and also within the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>450</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, p. 247.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*

British press and public opinion were sceptical, but this soon changed and the new government in Constantinople started to receive compliments from London. The British government was convinced that the situation in the Balkans would change and the Macedonian reforms, together with the armed bands and the Albanian Question, would melt away once the problems were addressed properly by the new constitutional and elected government. This led British diplomats in Constantinople to justify their previous policy toward the Young Turks: 'sympathy has always existed between the people of Great Britain and the population of Turkey', adding that grievances or misunderstandings of the British government 'were against the Turkish Government only.'<sup>452</sup>

Therefore, the revolution that brought about the change of government in Constantinople, was quickly welcomed with enthusiasm by the British government. The Foreign Office issued a memorandum explaining that this enthusiasm stemmed from three reasons:

1. From the abstract love of liberty;
2. From the traditional friendship with Turkey which begun in [the] days when Russia was our traditional enemy;
3. From the belief that the Muhamedan [Muslim] population of India is particularly loyal to England and can be still propitiated by kindness to Turkey.<sup>453</sup>

As noted above, the third point of the memorandum alludes to both the satisfaction and concern held by the British about the outcome of the revolution. If the Young Turks, with the help of the British government, were able to create a strong government and a strong empire, then the Muslims of India and other parts of the British dominions might appreciate Britain's help. Yet there was also a possibility that this could inspire the Indian Muslims to create their own government and constitution, something the British did not want. The situation could also have an effect on Egypt and it was for this reason that Grey told his ambassador Gerald Lowther: 'I should say as little as possible to the Khedive about a constitution for Egypt'. If the Young Turks could create a strong government, this reality 'must have a great effect in Egypt and upon our policy there', wrote Grey.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid, p. 254.

<sup>453</sup> Memorandum respecting the Turkish revolution and its consequences, 1 March 1909, NA, FO, 371/581, Nr. 1.

<sup>454</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, p. 309.

Despite these concerns, the British were optimistic about the new Ottoman government, hoping to reassert their influence which had been overtaken by the Germans in the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin. British diplomats in Constantinople, who were predominantly Gladstonians, were convinced that German diplomats were at great pains to prove the Young Turk Revolution was the result of British intrigues and, as such, was doomed to fail.<sup>455</sup> If this is what the German diplomats thought, they were mistaken but they were right to express fear that the new Young Turk government, under the influence of the British, may abolish capitulations which offered suitable trade conditions to the Germans. The British also hoped that Vienna, because it administered Bosnia and Herzegovina, had a good reason to be sceptical about the Young Turk government. The Russian government viewed the changes with sympathy but its diplomats in Constantinople believed that the revolution was doomed to failure.<sup>456</sup>

For these reasons, the British government believed that the revolution offered new and favourable opportunities to improve their weakened position in Constantinople. To achieve this goal, Grey told Lowther to advise the Young Turks not to move too fast in implementing their political program because they may create confusion or provoke unwanted reactions. The most important thing for the Young Turks was first to get the government into their hands by employing honest and able politicians, advised Grey. He also believed a good Young Turk government should be built on sound finances and the British would use all their 'influence to prevent their being interfered with from outside'.<sup>457</sup>

While Grey believed in reforms, his diplomats in Constantinople expected British business to acquire parts of various economic projects throughout the Ottoman Empire. Grey emphasised that he was 'distressed' when he became foreign secretary because the British were 'ousted from commercial enterprises in Turkey and how apparently hopeless it was to get any footing there'.<sup>458</sup> With the old regime gone and the Young Turks in power, there were hopes in London that British businessmen and financiers would strengthen British interests and influence in the Ottoman Empire. However, British diplomats in Constantinople expressed some scepticism. The situation changed when, on 5 October

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, p. 254.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid. pp. 266-7.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

1908, Bulgaria proclaimed independence, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia, and Crete declared its unification with Greece. This was a serious blow to the Young Turks. In order to help the Porte, the British had taken a diplomatic lead before Bulgaria proclaimed independence. On 2 October 1908 the Foreign Office issued a circular urging the Powers to prevent the Bulgarian government from declaring independence. Most of the Powers, including Russia, agreed with the British and reminded the Bulgarian government about the dangers a declaration of independence would bring.<sup>459</sup>

Edward Grey, like the Ottoman government, pointed out to the Austro-Hungarians that with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Treaty of Berlin was violated. Vienna had also violated the Convention of 21 April 1879, which stated that the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina should not affect the rights of the sovereignty of the Sultan. Vienna did not argue with the essence or the meaning of the Treaties but stated that the real reason for the 'immediate necessity of annexation was the Serbian propaganda' in which even the Serbian King Petar was involved.<sup>460</sup> The Austro-Hungarian Emperor told the British ambassador that annexation was inevitable and complained about British public opinion being very severe against Vienna's policy towards the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. In reply, the British ambassador said that there is a strong sympathy 'for [the] Young Turks in England'.<sup>461</sup>

This crisis, particularly the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, brought Serbia onto the international scene. Austria-Hungary had traditionally supported Serbia's aspirations against the Ottoman Empire. Serbia's growing nationalist ambitions had regarded Austria-Hungary as a protector and hoped to extend towards her neighbouring territories. But the annexation turned Austria-Hungary from a protector into a potential enemy of Serbia and frustrated Serbia's nationalist aspirations. This brought Serbia closer to Russia, therefore making it a threat to Austria-Hungary and *vice versa*. As Russia got closer to Belgrade, Vienna felt that it was being pushed away from the spheres of interest in the Balkans.<sup>462</sup> After the annexation, Serbia mobilised its troops and launched a protest to the Powers,

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<sup>459</sup> Hasan Ünal, 'Ottoman Policy during the Bulgarian Independence Crisis, 1908-9: Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria at the Outset of the Young Turk Revolution', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34 (1998), pp. 135-176 (pp. 147-151).

<sup>460</sup> Grey to Goschen, 7 October 1908, NA, FO, 371/551/35115.

<sup>461</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, pp. 458-9.

<sup>462</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers, How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), pp. 34-37; Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbours, Friends* (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 173.

demanding an extension of its territory across the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar, in order to reach the Albanian coast.<sup>463</sup> After the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar was returned to the *vilayet* of Kosovo.

The British ambassador in Belgrade, James Whitehead, sketched with sympathy the 'aspirations of the Servian [Serbian] Nation for eventual union with the people of the same race and language' who were under Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian rule.<sup>464</sup> He believed that the transfer of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary was a 'crushing blow to the most cherished aspirations', leaving the Serbs to hope for an increase in territory towards 'Old Serbia', as Kosovo was known. As a result of the annexation, Russia, assisted by Britain and France, supported Serbia's aspirations against the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was firmly backed by Germany. Russia was forced to back down, leaving Serbia deeply hostile towards Austria-Hungary, a situational which became an important feature of European politics in the lead-up to the First World War.<sup>465</sup>

As the situation in the Balkans was changing, the Foreign Office asked Fitzmaurice to prepare a memorandum which would examine the possibilities of Serbian and Montenegrin territorial extensions. Spizza (Shpica), an Albanian town, had been given to Austria-Hungary by the Treaty of Berlin to be administered, as was Bosnia and Herzegovina. Now, the town could be ceded to Montenegro, which could get more territory in Dalmatia to the north and in Albania and Kosovo to the south east. Compensating Montenegro with Albanian territory was always difficult, as the Ulqin problem had shown in 1880 and could lead to a resurgence of armed Albanian resistance which the Foreign Office wanted to avoid. However, the extension of Serbia was more complicated. The memorandum explained why Serbia wanted part of Kosovo:

They want it firstly on practical grounds, in order to improve their frontier, and for reasons connected with roads and railways; secondly, because it contains the so-called Amselfeld, or Field of Sparrows, where Servia lost her independence in 1389 and the united Christian armies were destroyed in 1448. [...] An appeal to

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<sup>463</sup> Richard C. Hall, ed., *War in the Balkans: An Encyclopedic History from the Fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Breakup of Yugoslavia* (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2014), p. 41.

<sup>464</sup> Whitehead to Grey, 13 October 1908, NA FO, 371/399.

<sup>465</sup> Carl Cavanagh Hodge, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Age of Imperialism 1800 - 1914, Vol. 1* (London: Greenwood Press, 2008), p. 38.

the Battle of Kosovo invariably excites the Servian imagination. [...] The cession of this district to Servia, would probably be met with resistance by the Albanians; they would also resist the cession of the north-western part of the Vilayet to Montenegro, which would very much like to have it.<sup>466</sup>

The author of the memorandum, influenced by both Serbian propaganda and British Liberal thought, went on to explain that the majority of the population were once Christian Serbs but were converted into Muslim Albanians. However, if the Albanians were to resist Serbian territorial expansion into their lands, then Serbia could try to expand towards Bulgaria.<sup>467</sup> In the end, Fitzmaurice did not consider these suggestions helpful but the Foreign Office had no other proposal and so this memorandum became the document upon which British foreign policy regarding Serbia and its extensions towards Albania and Macedonia was based. The European Powers were divided concerning the right of Serbia to expand following the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the memorandum illustrates, Britain was slowly taking the side of Serbia.

By the end of 1908, when the Ottoman Parliament was formed in Constantinople, the Young Turks received more support from the British government. At the same time, the honeymoon period between the Albanians and the Young Turks was over and both parties became fierce enemies. The British government, by supporting Serbia's future plans as well as the policies of the Young Turks, was not seen as a friend of the Albanians. On these two matters the British government was fully supported by the majority of the public at home. Just before Christmas of 1908, Edith Durham returned to England from Albania where she had witnessed the difficult situation between the Albanians and the Young Turks. She wrote:

I arrived in London, and was amazed to find for the first time people who believed in the Young Turks. They would listen to no facts, and would not believe me when I said that the Turkish Empire, as it stood, would probably barely survive one Parliament.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> See: 'Memorandum respecting Article 29 of the Treaty of Berlin', in Gooch and Temperley, *Vol. V*, pp. 461-2; Foreign Office Memorandum, 21 October 1908, NA, FO, 36795/31738/08/44.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>468</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 173.



Durham's prophesy was almost exactly fulfilled. Disappointment with the Young Turks, which initially started in Albania, spread widely throughout the Ottoman Empire. On 3 April 1909 a counter-revolution against the Young Turks and the constitution broke out in Constantinople. On this occasion, as we shall see below in more detail, Ismail Bey played a prominent role. The counter-revolution against the Young Turks created some controversies in British–Ottoman relations. Some historians, such as Ahmad Feroz, have wrongly suggested that the British supported Ismail Bey and Kiamil Pasha's activities to bring down the Young Turks.<sup>469</sup>

Before looking at the role the British played in this event, it is necessary to understand that there were factions which produced differences of opinions within the Young Turks, the government and the parliament. There were three main personalities representing three different opinions. Ahmed Riza, president of the parliament, represented the hard line of the Young Turks, Ismail Bey Qemali was the leader of the Ahrar (Liberal) Party and the opposition in parliament, while Kiamil Pasha was trying to find a compromise between the opposition and the Young Turks. Both Ismail Bey and Kiamil Pasha were known as being pro-British. Although the British attitude towards the Young Turks was supportive, some historians suggested that Ahrar, led by Ismail Bey and supported by a section of the Albanian troops in the Ottoman army, succeeded in staging a counter-revolution because the British were behind him. The British were also suspected of having been involved in fomenting the counter-revolution and even supplying the opposition to the Young Turks with funds through their embassy in Constantinople. The British supposedly took this action because of their commitments to Russia, which originated in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and as such it was an anti-Ottoman policy.<sup>470</sup> In his memoirs, Ismail Bey alleged that it was he who had convinced Lowther to offer some support to the counter-revolution. On another occasion, when it became clear that the CUP was about to regain power, Ismail Bey asked Lowther for British intervention. It is not clear what exactly Ismail Bey meant by intervention, but his proposal was not considered by the Foreign Office. On this matter, Ismail Bey wrote:

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<sup>469</sup> Feroz Ahmad, 'Great Britain's Relations with the Young Turks, 1908-14', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2 (1965-6), pp. 309-15 (p. 311).

<sup>470</sup> Hasan Ünal, 'Britain and Ottoman Domestic Politics: From the Young Turk Revolution to the Counter-Revolution, 1908-9', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37. 2 (2001), pp. 1-22 (p. 11).

He [Lowther] did not entirely reject my suggestion that the British Government should intervene, but asked me who would propose such interference. When I replied that I would ask the Sultan to do so, he said such a demand from His Majesty would no longer carry weight. In that case I said I would see to it that the request came from the Grand Vizier, and the Ambassador's reply was that in that case he would see what could be done. When I saw the Grand Vizier, Tewfik Pasha, on the matter same evening, he was too upset by the situation to be able to take any resolution.<sup>471</sup>

It was known that Lowther did not have much sympathy for the Young Turks, a position he had expressed several times to Grey. There were other diplomats in the British embassy who did not agree with the Young Turks, Fitzmaurice being one of them. His influential role in British diplomatic circles, good connections with newspapers and the fact that he was an important personality among the power-brokers of the Ottoman world led some diplomats to indicate that he was in some part responsible for the counter-revolution.<sup>472</sup>

Aubrey Herbert, who supported the Albanian cause and had worked in the British embassy in Constantinople in 1904-5, blamed Fitzmaurice for leading an anti-Young Turk policy. Like many Albanian nationalists, Herbert too, believed that there would be a solution for the Albanian question under the Young Turk democratic rule. Herbert was a well-known supporter of the Young Turks and a friend of Enver Bey and other leading members of the organisation, most of whom, including Talaat Pasha, regarded Fitzmaurice as being hostile to the CUP.<sup>473</sup> However, none of these suspicions or allegations were true and there are no documents to support the involvement of the British in the counter-revolution. Lowther, although he disliked the Young Turks, executed British policy as advised by the Foreign Office.

Ismail Bey Qemali seemed to have exaggerated his role in the counter-revolution because, as a politician, he wanted to portray himself as being important and having the British behind him. As a matter of fact, as we shall see below, the British embassy helped him to escape from Constantinople after his plan failed, but that was all they did for him. There is

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<sup>471</sup> Kemal, *Memoirs*, pp. 343-344.

<sup>472</sup> Bruce Clark, 'Shifting Western Views on Turkey', *Asian Affairs*, 43 (2012)  
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2012.682365>> [accessed 23 October 2015].

<sup>473</sup> Aubrey Herbert, *Ben Kendum: A Record of Eastern Travel* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), p. 313.

further evidence to show that Ismail Bey was not fully supported by the British. Lowther had told Grey that he did not trust Ismail Bey and when Ismail Bey went to the Foreign Office in autumn 1909, he was met by Tyrrell (Grey's secretary) rather than by Grey himself.<sup>474</sup> These facts demonstrate that Ismail Bey was not trusted by the British for a venture such as bringing the Young Turks down from the power.

After all, there was no reason for the British to turn their backs on the Young Turks. With the Young Turks in power, British diplomats saw themselves as once more becoming an important factor in Constantinople. Grey was pleased with the Young Turks' dethronement of Abdul Hamid II. Grey had some doubts about the Young Turks being corrupt, but they impressed him with the way they returned to power. In a letter that Grey sent to Lowther after the Young Turks came to power, he explained the situation and put aside all doubts. Grey advised Lowther not to be pessimistic, as he once was, but to continue to support the Young Turks.<sup>475</sup>

The Foreign Office continued to support the Young Turks even after they promulgated the Law of Association in August 1909 which sought to abolish national differences in the Ottoman Empire. It was with these intentions that the Young Turks had organised the Congress of Dibra in July of that year, seeking to suppress Albanian nationalism by attacking the language and its Latin alphabet. The Congress, which was supposed to convince the Albanians to drop their idea of a Latin alphabet, had failed because all the Albanian leaders and intellectuals boycotted the event. Yet Grey supported the Young Turk idea of Ottomanising the Albanians and other nationalities. On this matter he wrote to the Russian diplomat, Count Izvol'ski, expressing his support for the actions undertaken by the Young Turks.<sup>476</sup>

The Young Turks were also supported by the British press. When the Albanians rose against the Young Turks in April 1910, *The Times* published a communication which was sent to them from the Ottoman Embassy in London. The readers could only get the official view which stated that the Albanians in the *vilayet* of Kosovo rose against the Empire 'because

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<sup>474</sup> Ünal, *Britain and Ottoman Domestic Politics*, pp. 1-22.

<sup>475</sup> Gooch and Temperley, *Vol V*, pp. 319-320.

<sup>476</sup> Heller, p. 32.

they did not want justice, liberty, equality, schools...'<sup>477</sup> From their perspective, the Albanians wanted exactly that. The event attracted the attention of the press in Europe and beyond. Reporting on the same event, a South African newspaper *The Natal Mercury* wrote that 30,000 armed Albanians rose against the Porte. 'At any rate, the ugliness of the crisis can no longer be concealed', it was said in the article. Yet this article, like many others published in Britain, argued that the cause of the crisis that the Albanians had created in the Balkans was unclear.<sup>478</sup>

There were only a few people in Britain who knew or cared about the true cause of the Albanian rebellions and insurrections against the Young Turks. George Frederick Abbott<sup>479</sup> explained that information from Albania was missing because the public and the government, being on the side of the Young Turks, were not interested in knowing the truth. Based on a letter he had received from 'a credible source from Shkodra' he wrote in the *Saturday Review*:

In the accounts published in the press – accounts inspired partly by ignorance of the real conditions and partly by the Turkish authorities – there is a bewildering confusion regarding the true causes of the Albanian insurrection, to say nothing of the true state of affairs in the field of operations.<sup>480</sup>

Abbott explained that the Young Turk government was worse than any that had come before it. He considered their governance in Albania 'military despotism'. Explaining the situation further, he added that Young Turk officers had only one idea in their heads: 'the reconstruction of the Great Ottoman Empire and the triumph of Islam,' but 'the Albanians will not be Ottomanized'. Abbott was also in favour of British engagement in the Balkans and specifically in Albania. He criticised the British government for adopting mistaken policies towards Albania, on which he wrote:

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<sup>477</sup> The Communication of the Ottoman Embassy, *The Times*, 7 April 1910, HR.SYS.00135/5.

<sup>478</sup> 'The Albanian Outbreak', *Natal Advertiser*, 26 April 1910; 'The Albanian Insurrection', *Natal Mercury*, 27 April 1910 and 'The Albanian Revolt', *Natal Mercury*, 30 April 1910, HR.SYS.00119/20.

<sup>479</sup> George Frederick Abbott (1874 - 1947) was a British author and journalist (war correspondent). In 1900 he was sent to Macedonia by Cambridge University to study the folklore of the Balkan people and was considered a Balkan expert.

<sup>480</sup> G. F. Abbott, 'Young Turks in Albania', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Art and Science*, 109 (1910), pp. 659-660 (p. 659) <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/876924107?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 10 January 2016].

Our prestige has fallen low. We have persistently backed the wrong cards. Austria holds the right ones. We were made to look foolish the year before last, when Bosnia was annexed by saying 'England will not allow the Berlin Treaty to be violated' and then saying 'All shall be forgotten and forgiven – help yourself gentlemen'. It is folly to bark if you don't mean to bite.<sup>481</sup>

Abbott not only criticised the British government for their non-involvement, but also pointed out that the desire for autonomy was the main reason for the conflict between the Albanians and the Young Turks. However, at this point the Foreign Office was ignoring the Albanian Question and was not interested in understanding the cause of the conflict. Yet there were cases when the British diplomats in Constantinople had given some importance to the Albanian Question. At the beginning of 1909 Mansuelli, an army officer and former military attaché in Constantinople, recommended the formation of an independent Albania and a greater Bulgaria in order to create an obstacle to Austro-Hungarian and German expansion in the Balkans.<sup>482</sup> But Lowther, even by 1910, still believed that the 'thorny Albanian question' could be solved by bribing, decorating or by granting land to the Albanian leaders. This method of rule in Albania was applied by the Sultan himself but was about to collapse. Fitzmaurice's reports began to be read with more interest by Grey, Morley and even Prime Minister Asquith. Fitzmaurice, in more than one report, warned that discontent in Macedonia and Albania would cause the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>483</sup> The Foreign Office disregarded such warnings and continued to believe in the Young Turks and the constitution.

#### Unifying the language and the nation

The reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution in Constantinople was regarded as an Albanian triumph in northern Albania. Edith Durham, who was in Albania at that time, noted that diplomatic and consular representatives in Shkodra, including the British, were 'sceptical and contemptuous' about the changes the constitution may bring. Yet regarding

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Heller, p. 24.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid, p. 40.

the atmosphere in Shkodra, Durham wrote that 'all North Albania was wild in joy 'and 'it was believed that Europe had intervened, and the Turk would rule no more.'<sup>484</sup>

Elsewhere in Albania, as in Shkodra, the meaning of the constitution was rather misunderstood. The majority of the population were illiterate and had lived for a long time under Ottoman rule which had prohibited education in the Albanian language. As a result they had little idea what the constitution really meant. Nevertheless, the constitution introduced a considerable degree of liberty which made some Albanian intellectuals return home from exile. The first issue they hurried to address was opening new schools in order to educate the population. Immediately after the proclamation of the constitution, Albanian intellectuals started establishing national clubs throughout Albania and elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire or where they resided abroad. Through these national clubs they aimed to raise the national awareness of Albanians through education. The first club Bashkimi (Unity) was established in Manastir on 31 July 1908. Fehim Zavalani, who returned from exile, became president with Gjergj Qiriazi as his deputy, while Naum Naçi became secretary.<sup>485</sup> Within a short time Bashkimi sent emissaries to propagate the Albanian cause and spread its branches throughout Albania. Within a few months, 66 clubs were established and started to spread ideas of education and nationalism.<sup>486</sup> The result was noted by a British diplomat:

More important in that [nationalist] connection is the educational activity which displayed itself throughout Southern Albania immediately after the proclamation of the constitution. Early in August an Albanian school, founded and supported by voluntary contributions, in subscribing to which the population displayed a remarkable liberality, was established in Elbassan [Elbasan], two schools in Korytza [Korça], which had been closed under the old regime, were reopened, and the example of these two places was rapidly followed by all the principal towns throughout the south.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Edith Durham, *Of the Turkish Constitution*, RAI, MS 51:4; Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 162.

<sup>485</sup> Anamali and Prifti, pp. 380-1.

<sup>486</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities – Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs 1908-1918* (The University of Utah Press, 2014), p. 57.

<sup>487</sup> Lowther to Grey, 17 February 1909, NA, FO 371/581, Nr. 105.

To a lesser degree, schools were also established in northern parts of Albania. The national and cultural awakening, or Rilindja (Rebirth) which started at the beginning of nineteenth century and grew after 1878 was entering the last phase and achieving positive results. Albanian intellectuals were giving the last push to the idea of uniting the Albanian people under one linguistic identity, one culture and one nation living in one territory.<sup>488</sup>

However, establishing Albanian schools proved to be a difficult task. Until 1908 writing of the Albanian language was banned and schools were organised according to the religious division of Albanians: Muslim, Christian Orthodox and Catholic. Muslims were taught in Ottoman Turkish with Arabic letters, the Orthodox went to Greek schools, while Catholics used the Latin alphabet and Italian language. Therefore, these schools nurtured pro-Ottoman feelings for the Muslims, pro-Greek sentiments for the Orthodox and pro-Italian or pro-Austro-Hungarian tendencies for Catholics. Another problem was the lack of text books and teachers for the newly established schools that opened in August 1908.<sup>489</sup>

The teaching of the Albanian language became a patriotic duty and this brought into view the need to create a unified alphabet. During the summer of 1908, Albanian linguists started preparations to organise a congress and make a decision on this matter. This initiative disturbed conservative Albanians, most of whom were Muslim clerics, who declared that their official language should remain Turkish and that they would not recognise Albanian. This group was soon to be supported by the Young Turks, who saw the Albanian language as an important element of Albanian nationalism, and, as such, contrary to their idea of Ottomanism. The Greek Orthodox Church feared losing its influence over southern Albania and continually threatened Albanians, especially those students in Greek schools, with excommunication.<sup>490</sup> Apart from religious and political complications, there were also practical obstacles which were soon to be imposed by the Young Turks.

Before we discuss the unification of the Albanian alphabet, in order to have a better understanding of the situation that the Albanian nationalist intellectuals found themselves in by end of 1908, it is necessary to see how foreign support, mainly British, for the

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<sup>488</sup> Robert Elsie, *Albanian Literature: A Short History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 66.

<sup>489</sup> Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 366.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid*, p. 368.

language developed and became important to the Albanian national cause during the nineteenth century.

Significant support for the emergence of the Albanian national awakening came from the Arbëresh - the Albanians of Italy. Migration to Italy had begun in 1272 but settlements were mainly created during the fifteenth century as a result of the exodus that followed the Ottoman invasion and particularly after the death of Skanderbeg in 1468. In 1889 Lucien Bonaparte, Napoleon's nephew, who studied their dialect, noted that Albanian was still spoken in 69 provinces of 'Terra d'Otranto'.<sup>491</sup> With their attempts to discover their roots, the Arbëresh gave a significant push to the Albanian cultural and national awakening.

There was also help or influence which came from abroad. Such help, given particularly to the development of the Albanian language, and later nationalism, was rooted in Britain and connected with the Bible. The idea of translating the Bible into Albanian came from Jernej Bartolomeu Kopitar (1780–1844), a Slovenian linguist and philologist who worked for the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBC). Kopitar believed that the translation of the Bible into Eastern European languages would help the process of national revival among the Slav nations. He included Albanians in this group, although he knew they were not Slavs.<sup>492</sup> Reverend Pinkerton, who was put in charge of Albania, wrote that furnishing the Albanians with the Bible was 'an object highly worthy of the attention of the British and Foreign Bible Society.' The BFBC considered Albanians as a 'nation which occupies a great part of ancient Illyricum and Epirus, and speaks a language which seems to have no grammatical affinity with the Slavonian, Turkish, Greek, or Latin languages.' Therefore, the society, with 'most zealous efforts,' decided to give to the Albanians a New Testament in their tongue.<sup>493</sup> Although this was done primarily for religious purposes, the BFBC, as a British organisation, became instrumental in helping the Albanian national movement to spread its national awareness.

After many difficulties, 500 copies of the book of Matthew were published in 1824. Finally, in 1827, the whole New Testament was published in British-ruled Corfu and 2000 copies

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<sup>491</sup> Prince Louis-Lucien Bonaparte, *Albanian Dialects* (London: The Centre for Albanian Studies, 2014), p. 15.

<sup>492</sup> Xhevat Lloshi, *Përkhimi i V. Meksit dhe redaktimi i G. Gjirokastritit 1819 - 1827* (Tirana: Onufri, 2012), pp. 23-4.

<sup>493</sup> The Thirteenth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society (London: 1817), p. 93.



were printed.<sup>494</sup> Although the Greek Orthodox Church tried to prevent its distribution, this version of the Bible became popular and until the end of the nineteenth century it saw several further publications. The Bible Society continued to regard Albania seriously and believed that 'furnishing the Albanians with the Bible was a worthy work'.<sup>495</sup> Translations continued with Konstandin Kristoforidhi (1827–1895) who worked for the BFBC and translated the New Testament into both the Toskë and Gegë Albanian dialects. His Bible translations served as the basis for the modern Albanian language.<sup>496</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Bible played a crucial role in the development of the Albanian language and nationalism. 'The Albanian was invaluable to the Bible Society, and the Bible Society was invaluable to the Albanians', wrote Durham in 1904 while she was employed in distributing the Bible. At that time the Porte had banned the distribution of books in Albanian, but the Bible was distributed from the main depot in Manastir, which was practically in Albanian hands. On this Durham wrote:

The director of the Bible Depot in Monastir was an Albanian of high standing both as regards culture and energy. Grasping the fact that by means of these publications an immense national propaganda could be worked, he spared no pains, and by carefully selecting and training Albanian colporteurs, whose business it was to learn in which districts the officials were dangerous, where they were sympathetic, and where there were Nationalists willing themselves to risk receiving and distributing books, succeeded to a remarkable degree. [...] The Greeks, of course, opposed the work. A Greek Bishop is, in fact, declared to have denounced the dissemination of the New Testament and other works contrary to the teaching of the Holy and Orthodox Church.<sup>497</sup>

The Bible was such a popular book that it was even bought by Albanian Ottoman soldiers, Albanian Muslims who served in the Ottoman administration and Muslim school boys. The Bible became popular simply because it was a book in Albanian. Durham travelled

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<sup>494</sup> Lloshi, Përkhimi i V. Meksit, p. 89.

<sup>495</sup> Tanner, p. 78.

<sup>496</sup> Elsie, *A Biographical Dictionary of Albanian History*, p. 257. - In the Gegë version, Kristoforidhi used the Latin alphabet while in Toskë he used the Greek alphabet. He is also the author of a considerable number of literary works, including novels, dictionaries and grammar books. Therefore, he is considered as the father of the Albanian language and some called him the Albanian Luther.

<sup>497</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 89.

throughout Albania with the colporteurs and observed that the Albanian nationalist movement was spreading. Their leaders welcomed the Bible and supported its distribution because they saw this as a help against the influence of the Greek Orthodox Church and, as such, part of developing their national cause.<sup>498</sup>

Yet the cultivation of the Albanian language and the advancement of the national movement could not go far without schools. As Hroch noted, schools of the nineteenth century were important in developing a national identity for two reasons: they provided room for the transfer of nationally formative information to the wider population and paved the way for a strong communication network by being an essential tool for attaining literacy.<sup>499</sup>

As the Porte did not envisage any ideas for Albanian schools, the first initiatives to open Albanian secular schools were taken during the 1830s by a group of Albanian intellectuals. They tried to establish schools in urbanised centres of northern Albania, including Kosovo. Several small private schools were set up in Shkodra and were financially supported by local businesses, but could not last long because of insufficient funds and the negative attitude of the local Ottoman administration. These schools revealed the concept of the national character which aimed to unite Albanians by excluding religious or regional distinctions.<sup>500</sup>

However, opportunities to open schools grew with the formation of the Albanian League in 1878. On 12 October 1879, a number of Albanian intellectuals called the Istanbul Society gathered in Constantinople to launch an organisation they called *Shoqëria e të Shtypurit Shkronja Shqip* (Society for Printing Albanian Books). This was the first Albanian national organisation to have ever been registered legally in the Ottoman Empire. The goal of the Society was to establish a standard language and publish books, journals and newspapers to be used and understood by all and to be distributed throughout Albania. The Society also aimed to translate important books into Albanian.<sup>501</sup>

If we add other activities, such as preparing teachers and opening new schools which were sanctioned in the Society's constitution, then we may conclude that this organisation acted

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<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Miroslav Hroch, *European Nations: Explaining their Formation* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 105.

<sup>500</sup> Hysni Myzyri, *National Education During Albanian Renaissance* (Tirana: Mileniumi i Ri, 2007), pp. 31-2.

<sup>501</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States: 1804-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), p. 225.

as a sort of Ministry of Education of the Albanian League. The Istanbul Society was not under the dependency of the Albanian League in Prizren though they shared the same interest in education. The relation of the two organisations was explained in a letter that Sami Frashëri sent to Jeronim De Rada in 1881. Frashëri wrote that the work of politically unifying Albania was the work of the League, while the Society's work aimed to develop and refine the Albanian language, unify dialects and enlighten the nation.<sup>502</sup>

Unifying dialects, printing books and opening schools is a primarily cultural activity, but in the Albanian case it was also a political matter of national interest. However, the activities of the Istanbul Society were short lived and ended after 1881 when the Porte subdued the Albanian League and all other nationalistic activities. Among the immediate measures taken was the banning of literature from entering Albania. Then, the Ottoman authorities turned against the Istanbul Society and disbanded it. Many members were prosecuted, some were interned in other places in the Empire and some escaped punishment. The Patriarchate supported the actions of the Porte against the Albanian movement. Through local churches in Albania, the Patriarchate cursed and considered as heretics those Orthodox Albanians who used *Alfabetare* and any other book in the Albanian language. On several occasions the Patriarchate had warned the Porte about the 'dangers' the leaders of the Istanbul Society were creating for the Empire.<sup>503</sup>

With these measures, once high hopes of establishing Albanian schools were now lowered. The situation worsened after the brutal intervention of Dervish Pasha in northern Albania to subdue the Albanian League. *Drita* (Light) newspaper, which was published in Sofia wrote:

When he [Dervish Pasha] returned to Istanbul, he said to the Sultan: If permission is given to Albanians to learn their language together with the Christians, then not only shall Albanians and Albania escape from your hand, but Istanbul, too, is in danger. Not only must the Albanian language not be written and read, but every memory of this nation must also be erased and forgotten.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Myzyri, p. 72.

<sup>503</sup> Anamali and Frashëri, p. 146.

<sup>504</sup> Myzyri, p. 87.

It is hard to confirm if these were the exact words of Dervish Pasha spoken to the Sultan, but it is certain that this was how Rilindja activists wanted his actions to be perceived by Albanians. After 1881 the right to use and teach the language became a more nationalistic goal and therefore took a more aggressive attitude towards the Porte and neighbouring countries. At the same time the Albanians, their language and history were praised by Albanian writers. These writings were mainly poetry praising the Albanians as fighters for their freedom and out of love for their country. Vaso Pasha and Naim Frashëri were among the many poets who aimed to raise the national feeling and love for Albania.<sup>505</sup>

The Albanian school in Korça which was opened in 1887 was a result of many efforts by the Albanian intellectuals in Constantinople. It was soon followed as an example in some towns of south and central Albania. In the north it was not easy to open new schools before 1889, when only one was established in Prizren. However, the Austro-Hungarians took a step that satisfied, to a degree, the leaders of the Albanian national movement. On the initiative of Theodor Anton Ippen (1861-1935), the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, Vienna took over all of the elementary schools and replaced the Italian language with Albanian.<sup>506</sup> Lajos Thallóczy, an adviser on the Balkans in the Austro-Hungarian court, wrote to the Minister of Finance Béni Kállay and proposed to cover the expenses for a project of Albanian education. The project aimed to print a new alphabet book, a series of books and to fund a newspaper. This plan aimed to diminish Italian influence and establish a firm pro-Austro-Hungarian feeling among the Albanians. Other plans were also proposed and some were approved by the Austro-Hungarian government.<sup>507</sup>

In the south, schools functioned with difficulty because of the opposition which came from the Greek Church and Ottoman government. However, in 1891 the brothers Naim and Sami Frashëri managed to get another licence from the Ottoman government for the opening of Shkolla e Vashave (School for Girls) in Korça. The Frashëri brothers also mentored and supported the education of future nationalist teachers such as Sevasti Qiriazi (1871-1949) who graduated from Robert College in Constantinople in 1891. On her

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<sup>505</sup> Elsie, *Albanian Literature*, p. 71.

<sup>506</sup> Ippen to Zweidinek von Südenhorst, Nr. 110/2, Shkodër, 31 January 1898 - as registered in translated documents in Kosovo Archives also published in *Vjetari i Arkivit të Kosovës X-XI, 1974-1975*, pp. 452-3.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 446-465.

graduation day, she wrote in her diary to describe herself and her feelings using nationalist vocabulary.<sup>508</sup>

When the School for Girls was opened in Korça on 23 October 1891, Sevasti became a director. This was probably the most important school in the long history of Albanian education and was the only school which was not closed down by the Porte in 1904 when the Sultan, alarmed by the rise of Albanian nationalism, ordered the closure of all other schools. In 1909 the Young Turks again tried to close it down but did not succeed. The School for Girls was supported financially and morally by British and American Protestant Missions and it is likely this fact which induced the Porte to leave it open.<sup>509</sup>

Most of the Rilindja writers agreed with Sami Frashëri and held that the origin of the Albanian language and the Albanians was Illyrian. Most of them had written on Skanderbeg and agreed in their regard for him as a national hero.<sup>510</sup> In only a decade the education system and national movements had made an impact on a considerable number of the urban population, but more remote rural areas remained untouched. Yet still this was some progress. By now a network of writers, readers, educational and political activists had been created not only in Albania but throughout the Ottoman Empire and European countries where Albanians resided. However, one major problem remained unresolved. Schools, although functioning, were using different alphabets. Regional and religious divisions were also obstacles which made the national movement slow. The reinstating of the constitution in 1908 offered a chance to the Albanian national movement to narrow these differences and standardise the alphabet. For a long time, the alphabet was a concrete expression of Albanian nationhood, while schools were regarded as an appropriate place for taming differences between groups.<sup>511</sup>

During the summer and autumn of 1908, Albanian intellectuals agreed to hold a congress and make a decision on unifying the alphabet. On the initiative of the Bashkimi club, it was agreed that a congress should be held in Manastir and delegates from the four *vilayets* of

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<sup>508</sup> Kastrati and Anxhaku, p. 27.

<sup>509</sup> See: Parashkevi D. Kyrias, *The School for Girls Kortcha* (Chicago: Women's Board of Missions of the Interior, 1913); Charles H. Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe: Changes and Problems in the Near East* (London: Forgotten Books, 2013), pp. 114-118.

<sup>510</sup> Robert Pichler, ed., *Legacy and Change: Albanian Transformation from Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (Hamburg: LIT Verlag Münster, 2014), p. 14.

<sup>511</sup> Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 32.

Albania, other parts of the Ottoman Empire and from important Albanian cultural communities in Europe and the United States were invited.<sup>512</sup>

On 14 November 1908 hundreds of writers, journalists, teachers, language experts, publicists and clerics gathered in Manastir to take part in discussions about the Albanian alphabet. There were also students and ordinary members of the public who were interested in influencing the decision-making process. During the first and second days of the meeting, which rather resembled a big assembly, many participants gave speeches but as a matter of fact they spoke little about language or the alphabet. In their patriotic speeches, all expressed the need to create unity between the north and the south, Gegë and Toskë, Muslim and Christian, in order to create a single culture. This served the nationalist idea of one nation, one language and one alphabet. The meeting was opened by a Franciscan priest, pater Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) who was a fierce nationalist. Pater Fishta had, until then, written extensively on national themes aiming to awaken Albanian nationalist feelings and was to become the 'national poet of Albania' or the 'Albanian Homer'. He gave an 'artistic expression to the searching soul of the Albanian nation'.<sup>513</sup> Because of these qualities, Fishta was chosen to give the opening speech which was, as expected, predominantly nationalistic.<sup>514</sup>

Of course, the alphabet was not an issue which was to be decided by the masses, yet even among the experts discussions were of a nationalist tone. The object and the importance of the congress was noted by a British diplomat:

In November an Albanian National Congress assembled at Monastir, attended by fifty delegates, representing every section of the Albanian people – Musulman [Muslim], Catholic and Orthodox. The ostensible object of the meeting was apparently [an] elementary one of agreeing upon the adoption of a common alphabet, and the discussions were mainly literary; but the importance of the subject from a nationalist point of view is incontestable, the passion of a common

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<sup>512</sup> Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov, eds., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans, Vol. 1: National Ideologies and Language Policies* (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2013), p. 404.

<sup>513</sup> Elsie, *Albanian Literature*, p. 117.

<sup>514</sup> Myzyri, pp. 231-2.

medium of inter-communication being absolutely essential to the formation of a real national sentiment.<sup>515</sup>

As the report noted, the importance of the congress was not only to be seen in the context of education. It also had the political effect of further forging the bond of unity among Albanians and advancing their nationalist aims. The fact that the town of Manastir was chosen for the congress, was political and laden with nationalist meaning. With this, the organisers of the congress wanted to transmit a message to Bulgarians, Macedonians and others that the town and the region was Albanian. The same message was sent to the Greeks when it was announced that the Second Congress of Alphabet would take place in Janina in 1910. The other importance was that during the congress participants also held secret meetings in order to organise against the Porte and those neighbouring countries that had territorial pretensions in Albania. In secret sessions, a national program of 18 points was approved. Shahin Kolonja, who was elected a member of the Ottoman Parliament, presented a program for the autonomy of Albania which was widely supported by participants of the congress and intended to be presented to the Ottoman Parliament.<sup>516</sup>

The political achievement of the congress was arguably more important than its linguistic achievement and was in fact the primary goal of all participants who held nationalist ideas. However, this was not what the Young Turks expected nor desired. The Latin alphabet, adopted by the Congress of Manastir, caused new confrontations between Albanian nationalists and the Young Turks.

#### Counter-Revolution: Albanian nationalism vs Young Turkish nationalism

The Congress of Manastir initiated a conflict between Albanian nationalists and the Young Turks, who saw the activity around the development of the Albanian language as a way of advancing Albanian nationalism. As a matter of fact, from now on Albanian nationalists were not only struggling against Ottomanism but were faced with a new nationalism in the form of Turkism.

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<sup>515</sup> Lowther to Grey, 17 February 1909, NA, FO, 371/581, Nr. 105.

<sup>516</sup> Elsie, *A Biographical Dictionary of Albanian History*, p. 248.

As we have seen previously, the Young Turk movement was established as a multi-ethnic or multinational organisation with Ottomanism as a strong bond between its members. In this regard, CUP leaders made efforts to win over intellectuals, but many rejected the idea because they saw within Ottomanism the presence of Turkism which aimed to dominate the movement. From the start the Young Turk movement showed some presence of Turkish nationalist idea and it was for this reason that some Albanian nationalists, including Ismail Bey Qemali, never fully cooperated with the Young Turks or only did so with doubts. Turkish nationalists gained the upper hand in the movement after the Congress of Paris in 1902. Ahmed Riza, the CUP leader, increasingly replaced the term 'Ottoman' with 'Turk' and this further shifted attention from Ottoman to Turkish nationalism. By the end of 1908 the Young Turk movement had undergone this transformation and in the process changed its policies and even its symbols become increasingly Turkish.<sup>517</sup>

As a result of this increase in Turkism, Sami Frashëri's work on defining the nation as an 'ethno linguistic category based on historic primordial races' became increasingly attractive for Albanian nationalists. Frashëri called for the revival of the literary works that were written, using the Latin alphabet, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries by Albanian priests. In this vein he characterised Pjetër Bogdani's work as important and described it as 'written in a very clean literary language' which should be considered as the 'basis of the [Albanian] language'.<sup>518</sup>

Frashëri also influenced Yusuf Akçura (1876-1939) who was working on developing Turkish nationalism. Frashëri and Akçura believed that multiple ethno-linguistic nations were in conflict with each other and must fight for their survival. This theory, which was based on 'proto-Darwinian understanding,' rejected Ottomanism as an outdated ideology.<sup>519</sup> Contributing further to the theory of national ideology in ethno-linguistic terms, Licursi stated:

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<sup>517</sup> Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, p. 317.

<sup>518</sup> Sami Frashëri, *Personalitetet Shqiptare në Kâmus Al-a`lâm* (Shkup: Logos – A, 2002), p. 75.

<sup>519</sup> Licursi, p. 85.



Albanians and Turks needed to adopt similar nationalist strategies for their survival as nations, even if that meant abandoning Ottomanism and the Empire, as such.<sup>520</sup>

Although it is likely that Frashëri and Akçura wanted a peaceful relationship between Albanians and Turks, their ideas led to an inevitable confrontation between the two nationalities. However, there was a point on which both thinkers disagreed. Frashëri advocated for an autonomous or independent Albania, while Akçura insisted that the Turks could fit into the Ottoman state by applying Turkist aims and ideas without rejecting Islam. Since religion was not a unifying factor for Albanians, Frashëri promoted a secular Albanian nationalism but, as Keiser stated, both ideologies went on to ‘undermine the notion of Ottoman citizenship’.<sup>521</sup>

It is not clear if Akçura and other Turkish ideologists regarded Albanians as a nationality that could embrace their pan-Turkish ideology, but it was obvious that Albanian nationalists were not going to entertain such ideas. This theoretical development had an impact on the relationship between Albanian nationalists and Ottoman or Turkish nationalists, which came into view in the debates of the Ottoman parliament. Even before the elections and the Congress of Manastir took place, relations between the Albanians and the Young Turks had started to deteriorate.

The CUP became the dominant actor in Ottoman politics after the Young Turk Revolution which marked a strong shift in the organisation of elites from many ethnic groups or nationalities in the Ottoman Empire. The Albanian conservative elite had benefited from the Sultan’s regime. However, the Young Turk Revolution changed this situation by replacing conservatives with an intellectual nationalist elite with leaders such as Hasan Prishtina (1873–1933), Mufid Libohova (1876–1927), Nexhib Draga and many others. Regarding this change, Hanioglu noted:

All of these aimed at uniting Albanians of three different faiths under the flag of Skënderbeu [Skanderbeg] and called for reforms for the benefit of all Albanians.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Turkey Beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 70.

<sup>522</sup> Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, p. 315.

It should be noted that Albanian nationalism and the Young Turk movement were elitist ideologies and did not make a fast or significant impact on the masses. The unrest in northern Albania started immediately after the Young Turk Revolution and had little to do with nationalism. A British diplomatic report noted that the restored constitution was not a 'fortnight old' when the Porte had to dispatch the army to Kosovo in order to suppress the 'reactionary movement' of Isa Boletini.<sup>523</sup> Boletini, along with a group of conservatives, was committed to fighting the Young Turks out of fear that they would lose benefits given by the Sultan. Albanian nationalists took the side of the Porte or the Young Turks because they wanted to get rid of conservatives such as Boletini, who was becoming an obstacle not only to the Porte but also to the Albanian nationalist idea. Boletini, along with other conservatives such as Hasan Budakova, Hasan Shllaku and Rrustem Kabashi, rose again against the Young Turks in November 1908. They expelled the judicial authorities, the police and the rest of the administration and announced that they would not accept the constitution. A considerable force was sent against them and their movement was promptly suppressed.<sup>524</sup>

Isa Boletini, although a conservative and a fierce Ottomanist, was becoming a hero simply because he was seen as a fighter against the Young Turks who, by this time, had turned against Albanian nationalism. Where Albanian nationalists and Young Turks could not 'sell' their ideas because the population was widely illiterate, Isa Boletini could raise an army against the Porte. Therefore, Albanian nationalist leaders had no choice other than to co-opt Boletini for their own aims and bring him into their midst. In the years to come, Boletini became the commander of the Albanian army that fought for autonomy and later independence, with Kosovo and Macedonia as the battle ground.

For Albanians in Shkodra, Esat Pasha Toptani was one of the many reasons they became disappointed with the Young Turks. Esat turned out to be a secret member of the Young Turk movement and maintained the position of the commander of the gendarmerie. There was no change of local functionaries and all hopes and faith of Shkodra inhabitants in the new regime were shattered. A Shkodranes told Edith Durham: 'The Young Turks are the

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<sup>523</sup> Lowther to Grey, 17 February 1909, NA, FO, 371/581 Nr. 105.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

sons of the old ones'.<sup>525</sup> On another occasion, on the subject of the new regime of the Young Turks, Durham was also told that 'the Turk is always a Turk'.<sup>526</sup>

The situation in the *vilayet* of Shkodra led an Albanian delegation, comprised of both Muslims and Christians, to travel to Salonika to confer with the CUP leaders but there was no mutual understanding in their discussion of the situation. There were also problems with those Albanian Young Turks who returned from exile. Ibrahim Temo was surprised when he returned home and was told by a Young Turk activist, Ahmet Cemal Bey that the CUP had changed and was creating a society which was not something he had worked for abroad.<sup>527</sup> When Dervish Hima, also a well-known nationalist intellectual and a Young Turk, returned from exile, he delivered a nationalist speech at a banquet given in his honour by the Young Turk Committee. In his speech he said that 'the Albanians would never unite with the Turks'. The next day he was arrested.<sup>528</sup>

Meanwhile, national problems in Macedonia resurfaced again. The Bulgarian Internal Organisation of the *vilayet* of Manastir held a congress to demand 'autonomy for Macedonia as a whole' but proclaimed to respect the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>529</sup> The Bulgarian initiative caused worries among Albanian leaders because they were not seen as an important element in Macedonia. Difficulties were mounting and the Young Turks, as well as Albanian nationalists, were hoping that their problems would be solved by the parliament in a democratic way.

In September 1908 a British army officer, together with two Albanian Young Turk heroes, Enver and Nijazi Bey, toured the city of Salonika in a coach followed by a huge cheering crowd. Being aware of the serious problems that the ethnic groups or nationalities were facing in Macedonia, Enver Bey asked the crowd to aid the CUP by not putting obstacles in their way and 'await[ing] the assembly of the parliament to settle their grievances'. He added that the 'CUP was one body'.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Destani, *M. Edith Durham*, p. 127.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>527</sup> Gawrych, p. 155.

<sup>528</sup> Lowther to Grey, 12 October 1908, NA, CAB, 37/95, Nr. 1.

<sup>529</sup> Heathcote to Lowther, 16 September 1908, NA, CAB, 37/95, Enclosure 2 in Nr. 1.

<sup>530</sup> Keneth Bourne and Cameron Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Vol. 20, The Ottoman Empire under the Young Turks 1908-1914* (University Publications of America Inc., 1985), p. 9.

Elections and the parliament would prove that this was not the case. Before the elections were held, the CUP revealed its political program which appeared to be committed to Ottomanism but in reality was further promoting Turkism. Their political program revealed that Turkish would become the official language of the Empire, a plan which had a negative impact on Albanians and led their language to be attacked by the CUP.<sup>531</sup>

The debates of the first sessions of the Ottoman parliament brought into view the efforts of those deputies who wanted to differentiate themselves from other nationalities or ethnicities by language, culture, religion and historical importance. They saw this act as a way of advancing their nationalist ideology as it was important for nationalist representatives of the Albanians, Greeks, Bulgarians and Macedonians to prove that they were not only different from each other but moreover that they were not Turks. Thus, the Ottoman parliament became a venue in which the nationalist movements of the Empire expressed themselves.<sup>532</sup>

The fiercest debates fought and the harshest language used in the parliament was between Albanians and those who regarded themselves as Ottomans or Turks. Mufid Libohova, later to become foreign minister of Albania, mentioned the word *Arnavutlar* (Albanians) while speaking in the parliament.<sup>533</sup> At that moment Ahmed Riza, the president of the parliament, interrupted Libohova by shouting: *Arnavutlar Yok. Hepimiz Osmanliyiz* (There are no Albanians. We are all Ottomans). '*Var, efendem, var!*' (There are, Sir, there are!), answered Libohova, together with other Albanian deputies who rose from their seats to protest against Riza. The phrase "There are, Sir, there are!" became popular and was used by Albanian nationalists as a slogan.<sup>534</sup>

At the beginning of 1909, the Young Turks started to act against the result of the Congress of Manastir. Since the Young Turks were against the Albanian Latin alphabet and general use of the language, they took actions to try to convince the Albanians to retain Ottoman letters. On 4 February 1909, the Young Turks organised an assembly in a Bektashi

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<sup>531</sup> Gawrych, p. 156.

<sup>532</sup> Emre Sencer, 'Balkan Nationalisms in the Ottoman Parliament 1909', *East European Quarterly*, Spring (2004), pp. 41–64.  
<<http://0search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/abicomplete/docview/195174001/fulltextPDF/4BF84F7F4B4E4791PQ/1?accountid=14664>> [accessed 1 February 2015].

<sup>533</sup> Joseph Swire, *Albania: The Rise of a Kingdom* (London: William & Notgate, 1929), p. 92.

<sup>534</sup> Constantin Chekrezi, *Albania Past and Present* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1919), p. 67.

monastery in Tepelena, southern Albania. In order to gain Albanian support, the CUP portrayed itself as a guarantor of Albanian territorial integrity against Greek expansionist intentions. To the surprise of the Young Turks, the only question the Albanian leaders wanted to discuss was the autonomy of the four Albanian *vilayets*. In the end, the organisers of the assembly did not endorse the proposal. The assembly was conducted in secret and so the British, who had no diplomatic representation in south Albania, had no information about the agenda and outcome of the meeting. Lamb, the British consul in Salonika, asked Stranieri, the Italian consul at Prevesa, for information. When Lamb was informed, he interpreted Albanian actions as nationalistic. He added:

They [Albanians] are working by every means in their power, including the formation of bands, to affect the 'Albanianisation' of the Christian population.<sup>535</sup>

It is not clear what Lamb meant by the 'Albanianisation' of the Christians but one may presume that he wanted to explain that Albanian nationalists were working against the process of Hellenization of the Albanian Orthodox population. However, it was obvious that the Assembly of Tepelana had shown, yet again, the problem which existed between the Albanians and the Young Turks. The political position of the Albanian leaders 'diluted Young Turk illusions' and brought back 'the implications and particularities of the Albanian question.'<sup>536</sup>

The Ottoman parliamentary democracy was barely three months old when dissatisfaction against the Young Turks in Constantinople became public and increased significantly. Of all the nationalities the most dissatisfied were the Albanians, who now became a target of the Young Turk's anti-Albanian policies. In March the press campaigns for and against the Young Turks increased rapidly. One of the fiercest enemies of the Young Turks was the newspaper *Serbesti*. The editor in chief was an Albanian called Hasan Fehmi Bey (1874-1909) who was killed on 6 April by a Young Turk officer acting on behalf of the CUP.<sup>537</sup> Fehmi Bey was assassinated under similar circumstances and most likely for the same reason as another Albanian nationalist, Ismail Mahir Pasha. More than 5000 mourners took

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<sup>535</sup> Lowther to Grey, 26 February 1909, NA, FO, 371/581, Nr. 130; Lamb to Lowther, 30 March 1909, NA, FO, 371/581, Nr. 40.

<sup>536</sup> Christophoros Psilos, 'Albanian Nationalism and Unionist Ottomanization, 1908 to 1912'. *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 17. 3 (2006), pp. 26-42 (pp. 30-36) <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/med/summary/v017/17.3psilos.html>> [accessed 1 October 2015].

<sup>537</sup> Lowther to Grey, 14 April 1909, NA, FO, 371/ 581, Nr. 14544.

part in Fehmi Bey's funeral and expressed their anger at the CUP's efforts to restrict the liberty of the press. Among them were not only Albanians but many liberal deputies, Muslim clerics and a great number of theological students. The agitation did not end with the funeral but continued to manifest indignation with the new regime.<sup>538</sup> Many mourners wanted revenge which then served as a cause of important upcoming events. Fehmi Bey's work against the CUP may have been the result of the anti-Albanian policy of the Young Turks, but his death was taken by a wide population of Constantinople, mostly conservative and religious, as cause to launch a counter-revolution.

The CUP also showed open hostility towards Ismail Bey and other Albanian deputies. Acting out of fear of the Albanians, the CUP dismissed the Albanian Imperial Guard. The CUP declared that they had to take such a decision as they had information that the Guard was plotting to kill Ahmed Riza and his supporters.<sup>539</sup> In reality the CUP wanted to strip the Sultan of his powers and simultaneously to weaken Albanian influence in the Palace. The Imperial Guard had been an important Albanian institution in Constantinople so their dismissal came as a big blow to the Albanians and contributed another reason for the Albanians to join the counter-revolutionary movement which had already begun.

On 13 April a unit of Albanian soldiers and officers, probably acting at the request of Ismail Bey Qemali, seized the House of Parliament. A group of deputies, dominated by liberals of the Ahrar Party and religious exponents, which also became known as the Counter Revolutionary Group, gathered in the parliament and, headed by Ismail Bey, issued a six-point demand. Points 3 and 4 were of essential importance: 3. Ahmed Riza, President of the Chamber, should be dismissed and replaced by Ismail Bey; 4. The expulsion of leading members of the CUP from Constantinople.<sup>540</sup>

However, it was time for Enver and Nijazi Bey to protect their regime and the constitution they had contributed to reinstating a few months earlier. They mobilised Albanian troops and volunteers and joined the commander of the Third Army based in Salonika, Mahmud Shevket Pasha, the former *vali* (governor) of Kosovo. The constitutional army of 20,000 regulars and 15,000 volunteers entered Constantinople on 24 April and easily secured the

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<sup>538</sup> George Frederick Abbot, *Turkey in Transition* (London: Edward Arnold, 1909), p. 200.

<sup>539</sup> Lowther to Grey, 14 April 1909, NA, FO, 371/ 581, Nr. 14544.

<sup>540</sup> Lowther to Grey, 14 April 1909, NA, FO, 371/581, Nr. 14544; NA, CAB, 37/99, Nr. 62.

city. As Ismail Bey had played a prominent role in the counter-revolution, the CUP accused him of being 'privy and accessory to the reactionary movement' and demanded his head. As before, Ismail Bey turned to his friends, the British embassy and the Khedive dynasty, for help. He was swiftly evacuated to Greece but returned within a few weeks when the parliament reassembled and resumed the role of leading the opposition.<sup>541</sup>

The counter-revolution and the evacuation of Ismail Bey to Greece exposed a problem which existed between Albanian conservative and nationalist leaders and which was noted by British diplomats who monitored Ismail Bey's activities. The British consul in Salonika reported that a delegation of Albanian conservatives had travelled to the city to confer with CUP leaders when it became known that the counter-revolution was about to fail. Albanian conservatives demanded assurances that no harm would be caused to the Sultan and to Ismail Qemali's liberals who had led the counter-revolution.<sup>542</sup> On the other side, Albanian nationalists and Young Turks members, who opposed the counter-revolution, believed that Ismail Bey had taken the side of the conservatives and feared that he was about to travel to south Albania to organise an insurrection. Political activists of the Bashkimi club in Manastir, among them Abdyl Frashëri's son, Mit'hat Frashëri (1880-1949) sent telegrams to all the clubs in south Albania asking Albanian patriots to be aware of Ismail Bey's activities and not to entertain his suggestions. The British consul wrote that Albanian nationalist leaders regarded Ismail Bey as a 'noxious abominable individual who has associated himself with enemies of his country.' Furthermore, from Lamb's dispatches it can be seen that Ismail Bey tried to cross to into Albania from Greece but gave up, probably because of fear of reinforced Ottoman troops and Albanian nationalists who mobilised to block his activities.<sup>543</sup>

However, in Constantinople the Sultan was probably delighted with the short-lived result of the counter-revolution. He was at the centre of the conflict and the Young Turks, being aware of this fact, decided to take drastic measures against him. On 27 April the CUP took the decision to dethrone the Sultan. A group of four CUP members was sent to inform the Sultan about the decision: two Albanians, a Jew and an Armenian.<sup>544</sup> One of the Albanians

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<sup>541</sup> Bourne and Watt, p. 117.

<sup>542</sup> Lamb to Lowther, 25 April 1909, NA, FO, 195/2328, Nr. 53.

<sup>543</sup> Lamb to Lowther, 26 April 1909, NA, FO, 195/2328, Nr. 54.

<sup>544</sup> Gawrych, p. 167.

was Esat Pasha, who had found a way to enter the group and even managed to be appointed as the one who would communicate the bad news to the Sultan. Finally, Esat Pasha found himself in front of the terrified Sultan and spoke the words: 'Abdul, the nation hath pronounced thee deposed'.<sup>545</sup> The Sultan had favoured him and the entire Toptani family with positions and privileges. No other Albanian had benefited from the Sultan more than Esat Pasha and the Toptani family. Terrified and betrayed, the Sultan was heard whispering 'you are a wicked man'.<sup>546</sup> This case could serve as proof that the Sultan's policy of ruling Albania by favouring powerful Albanian families was a failure.

In a hasty ceremony and in extreme simplicity, Mahmud V (Abdul Hamid's brother), was appointed as the new Sultan. The street the new Sultan passed from the place of the ceremony to the Palace was lined with a battalion of Albanian soldiers, commanded by Nijazi Bey,<sup>547</sup> who wanted to show that Albanians still mattered in Constantinople. In reality, with the departure of Abdul Hamid II, the Albanians had lost their power and influence in the Ottoman Empire for ever. Abdul Hamid was sent into exile with his family to Salonika.<sup>548</sup> However, as we shall see later, Albanian conservatives made plans to rescue and return him to power.

Only a few days after Abdul Hamid was deposed at the end of April 1909, the Young Turks turned against the Albanians in Kosovo. The Albanians had rebelled against the Young Turks who imposed new taxes and armed men gathered in Ferizaj to demand the abolition of these new taxes. As the Young Turks had broken their promises, Albanians took the decision to fight their regime.<sup>549</sup> A force of 5000 Ottoman soldiers was sent to pacify them under the command of Cavit Pasha. After two months of fierce fighting and the destruction of many villages, Cavit declared a victory. In reality, he had not achieved his goal and as such a new campaign was started in September. The resistance of armed Albanians grew intensively and he was forced to retreat from Kosovo.<sup>550</sup>

The Albanians were rejecting the Young Turks whom they had helped come to power, a fact which caused some confusion and worry among British diplomats. The British

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<sup>545</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 174.

<sup>546</sup> Gawrych, p. 167.

<sup>547</sup> Lowther to Grey, 5 May 1909, NA, FO, 371/770; NA, CAB, 37/99, Nr. 74.

<sup>548</sup> Fred A. Reed, *Salonica Terminus* (Burnaby: Talonbooks, 1996), p. 16.

<sup>549</sup> Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 405.

<sup>550</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 240.



ambassador in Vienna, Fairfax Cartwright, asked the Greek diplomat Manos for information regarding the 'attitude' the Albanians had adopted against the Porte. Manos told Cartwright that his government was monitoring Albania with great interest. He added that Albanians had no sympathy for the Young Turks and the Albanian movement for autonomy 'would spread like wildfire throughout that Province'.<sup>551</sup>

The Greek diplomat hoped that the Albanians would turn towards Greece and favour the creation of an autonomous government under the personal suzerainty of the Greek king. He also told Cartwright that the Greek government, through their schools, 'has built a strong link of sympathy between the two countries.' The Greek diplomat expressed the view of his government and pointed out that the autonomy of Albania was to become a serious problem for Greece and other Balkan countries. This information did not seem to have been taken seriously by Cartwright or Grey, with Cartwright even writing that the 'Greeks open their mouths wide.'<sup>552</sup>

However, in Kosovo and Macedonia the campaign of Cavit Pasha caused the majority of Albanians to stop believing in the Young Turk's policy. Yet at the same time, the Young Turks strengthened their relations with the Serbs, their new ally in Kosovo. In 1908 in Skopje, under the leadership of Bogdan Radenković (1874-1917) and with Young Turk approval, the Serbs established the Organisation of Ottoman Serbs. This organisation spread its branches in Macedonia and Kosovo and also published a newspaper named *Vardar* with the purpose of supporting the Young Turks. *Vardar* unconditionally supported the Young Turk policy against the Albanian Latin alphabet. The Organisation of Ottoman Serbs kept an open relationship with Serbian paramilitary forces<sup>553</sup> and in August 1908 the Austro-Hungarian consul in Prizren reported that the local Serbs were actively taking part as members of Young Turk organisations in the town and the region.<sup>554</sup> Another report spoke of the Srpska Demokratska Liga (Serbian Democratic League) being formed in Skopje and spreading quickly throughout the *vilayet* of Kosovo.<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Cartwright to Grey, 12 May 1909, NA, FO 371/758, Nr. 82.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>553</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 240.

<sup>554</sup> See Prohaska's Report in *Izveštaji Austrougarskih Konzula iz Prizrena, Mitrovice i Skoplja o Prilikama na Kosovu Avgust-Decembar 1908, ed., by Đorđe Mikić* (Prishtinë: Vjetari i Arkivit të Kosovës, 1975), p. 238.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242-3.

When the punitive mission of Cavit Pasha failed, another Ottoman force was sent to Kosovo in spring 1910 when a revolt broke out, again because of taxes, under leadership of Isa Boletini and Idriz Seferi (1847–1927) who had gathered 9,000 armed men. The Porte sent a strong army under the command of Shevket Durgut Pasha, which clashed with Albanian insurgents who had blocked the railway from Macedonia. But the biggest battle took place in Carraleva, central Kosovo, where the Ottoman army was repelled. In difficult moments, the Ottomans were helped by the local Serbs who knew a short-cut over the mountains which forced the Albanians to withdraw before becoming encircled.<sup>556</sup> Boletini and Seferi escaped capture but many thousands were killed, imprisoned and interned. Durgut Pasha, now with a force of 40,000, continued westwards to Shkodra to disarm the Albanians and destroy northern parts of Albania.<sup>557</sup>

When the campaign was over, the Young Turks proclaimed martial law. They closed down Albanian schools and prohibited publications in Albanian. With this, the Young Turks broke the last and most important promise they had made in Ferizaj two years earlier. This enraged the few remaining Albanians who might have still believed in Young Turk policies. The CUP annual congress in October 1910 was held in Salonika. No Albanian delegate was present.<sup>558</sup> With their absence, the Albanians demonstrated the belief of many, that reaching a peaceful agreement with the Young Turks was impossible.

### Conclusion

The British government, hoping to regain influence in Constantinople, firmly supported the Young Turks between 1908 and 1910. Simultaneously, this meant less active engagement by the British in the Balkans and in the Albanian Question. The fact that the British stood behind the Young Turks and disagreed with the Austro-Hungarians on the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina produced a new situation in the Balkans in which Serbia emerged as an important player. The British gave signs of supporting the Serbian extension to the south, to the territories now known as Macedonia and Kosovo which at that time the Albanians considered belonged to them. Support for the Young Turks and for Serbian plans

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<sup>556</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 241.

<sup>557</sup> Abdyli, *Libri 1*, pp. 383-390.

<sup>558</sup> Ahmad, p. 59.

for extension also meant that the British did not give much consideration to the national cause of the Albanians. The British government still believed that the Albanian Question and other problems in the Balkans, specifically in Macedonia, would be solved by democratic or good governance by the Young Turks.

The Albanian nationalist leaders, like the British government, believed in the Young Turks' promises. They supported the movement because they hoped that the reinstatement of the Ottoman constitution and parliament would offer the possibility of overthrowing the Sultan's autocratic regime and solving the national problem by democratic means. As it turned out, the Young Turks kept none of the promises they had given to the Albanians. The Young Turks believed that schools and language were promoting Albanian nationalism and after they returned to power in 1909 broke their promise by closing down schools.

However, the Albanian leaders managed to unify their alphabet and, in doing so, strengthen their nationalist program. The Revolution also empowered Albanian nationalists and weakened the conservatives. The strand of Albanian nationalism which aimed for autonomy was an obstacle for the Young Turks, who initiated the centralisation of power with which they hoped to strengthen the Ottomanisation of the Empire and solve the problems in the Balkans. Thus, the Young Turks adopted an anti-Albanian policy which, as a result, hastened the confrontation between the Porte and Albanian nationalists. With the introduction of new taxes and the abolition of privileges, the Young Turks also turned the Albanian conservatives, who were traditionally pro-Ottoman, against them. After 1909 the policies of the Young Turks came to be the cause that united the whole Albanian political spectrum against the Porte.

The confrontation between the Young Turks and the Albanians which came as a result of new developments of the Albanian language brought to light a new problem which would result in major changes and bring into question the very existence of the Ottoman Empire. The growing and increasingly consolidated Albanian nationalism was now battling a new nationalism: Turkism. Therefore, disagreements between the Albanians and the Young Turks that started over language and initially manifested as confrontations in the press, parliament and other forums, mutated into armed conflict and produced consequences for the entire Balkan region.

## Chapter VI

### Albania's last efforts for autonomy and independence, 1911-1912

*The East depended upon the West and in the past an Englishman in Turkey who was a disinterested friend of any of the nationalities within the Ottoman Empire really had his own unassailable niche. All the people in Turkey, including the Turk, were in chronic state of shipwreck; the English were in permanent possession of the lifeboat, though often that boat could not put out to sea. – Aubrey Herbert.<sup>559</sup>*

#### Introduction

After the Congress of Berlin, the perseverance of the increasingly weak Ottoman Empire depended on the position that the European Powers took on the Eastern Question. The Porte had particularly counted on British support. Other nationalities, especially the Albanians, continued with efforts to win the British over to their side. Although for different reasons, both Ottoman officials and Albanian nationalists wanted British support. The Ottomans believed that British support would strengthen their empire. The Albanians maintained that with British support they would gain autonomy or independence, a move which would weaken the Ottoman Empire and consequently would end the Porte's rule in Europe.

This chapter presents the British government's position towards both the Albanian Question and the Ottoman Empire in the lead-up to the Balkan War. The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss the change in British policy towards the Ottoman Empire, which was made as a result of the Albanian insurrections of 1911 and 1912 and the growing influence of the Germans in Constantinople.

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<sup>559</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. xiv.

As will be shown below, the insurrection of 1911, which took place mainly among the Catholic population in north Albania, gained considerable publicity in the British and European press. As a result, the British attitude towards the Porte started to change, a fact which was assisted by Edith Durham's reports to the Foreign Office and the pieces she wrote for the British press. Further important changes came as a result of actions by a number of Serbian officials who influenced the policy of the Foreign Office.

Until 1911 the Young Turks had enjoyed the full support of the British government and showed no interest in solving the Albanian Question. Therefore, most of the Albanian leaders who were members of the Young Turk organisation abandoned its ranks and sought new ways of securing autonomy, namely by organising an uprising. Albanian leaders needed the support of the Powers and decided to put more effort into internationalising their national question. The internationalisation of the Albanian question meant that the involvement of the Powers, especially Britain, and of neighbouring states should work in favour of finding a favourable solution for the Albanians.

In 1912 Albanian leaders initiated another, better organised uprising which was ultimately more successful than that of 1911 because it opened the way for the process of autonomy. However, such plans for Albanian autonomy were against a mutual agreement achieved between Serbia and Bulgaria in March 1912 which sought to divide Macedonia and Kosovo between the two countries. Examples such as this demonstrate that autonomy, even though never implemented, became a concern for those neighbouring countries with plans for territorial expansion into territories that Albanian leaders considered their own. It will therefore be argued that even though the demand for autonomy was a success for the nascent Albanian nationalism, the friction it caused in the region quickly became the main cause of the Balkan Wars.

Amid the First Balkan War of October 1912 - May 1913, when most areas of the four Albanian *vilayets* were occupied by the armies of the Balkan League, Albanian leaders, with the support of Austria-Hungary, declared Albania an independent country on 28 November 1912. The Balkan Wars showed that by the end of 1912 the "friendly" British policy towards the Porte had become "unsupportive," a change which also affected Albania when the

British government announced that it would support the advancement of the Balkan League armies.

#### The insurrection of 1911

In January 1911, under the initiative of the Albanian nationalist writer Nikollë Ivanaj (1879–1951), an organisation called the Albanian Republican Committee was formed in Podgorica, Montenegro. The aim of the Committee was to organise a general uprising which would include Albanian organisations abroad. Ivanaj moved to Bari in southern Italy to continue his attempts to attract the help of local Albanian communities and the support or sympathy of the Italian government. Hopes increased when another committee called Pro Albania was formed a few weeks later by Albanians and Italian supporters of the Albanian national cause. Ivanaj's initiative was supported by Italian Albanians and soon attracted the sympathy of republicans, socialists and other Italian politicians who joined Pro Albania, which was soon able to gather the backing of 60 members of the Italian Parliament. The Committee also collected money, arms and registered thousands of volunteers who expressed readiness to cross the Adriatic under the command of Ricciotti Garibaldi, Giuseppe Garibaldi's son, and help Albanian insurgents in the north. Albanians in Italy also lobbied for the support of the Italian government, but the initiative was cut short. The Italian government was planning an invasion of Libya and was not interested in helping anyone with the intention of intervening in Albania because it could jeopardise relations with Austria-Hungary. Therefore, within a short time, the Italian government ordered all activities of Pro Albania to be stopped.<sup>560</sup>

Meanwhile, Albanian leaders who resided in territories of the Ottoman Empire continued with preparations for a general uprising and attracting the attention of the Powers in order to involve them in solving the Albanian Question. Ismail Qemali contacted European Powers to inform them about their plans.<sup>561</sup> The Powers, particularly Austria-Hungary, on whom Albanian leaders counted the most, were not pleased with this initiative. When it became clear that there would be no help from the Powers, Albanian leaders turned to

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<sup>560</sup> Prifti, pp. 442-43.

<sup>561</sup> Maringlen Verli, *Shqiptarët në optikën e diplomacisë austro-hungareze 1877-1918* (Tiranë: KLEAN, 2014), pp. 199–201.

their neighbouring countries. Ivanaj kept in touch with Garibaldi but moved to operate from Belgrade and tried to get support from the Serbian government.<sup>562</sup> After a short time Ivanaj moved to Sofia, from where he tried to bring together the Albanian leaders. His intention was to revive Shqënia e Zezë (the Black Society) which had been formed in 1878. From Sofia Ivanaj, together with five other activists, issued a declaration announcing the formation of the Komiteti Qendror i Shqipërisë (Central Committee of Albania) and asked other leaders to join.<sup>563</sup> Throughout 1911 there were high levels of communication between many Albanian leaders but they did not succeed in creating a single body to represent the whole country as they had planned but rather acted in several small groups or individually.

Ismail Bey Qemali contacted the Greek embassy in Constantinople and sent a message to the Greek government about the insurrection, which was expected to take place in the spring. The Greek government promised Qemali money, arms and ammunition.<sup>564</sup> However, none of these were ever delivered to the Albanians.

Isa Boletini went to Montenegro and received Serbian delegations on several occasions with the aim of forming an alliance with Serbia, Montenegro and Greece. Boletini continually met Serbian officials and army officers until late August 1912 when he hosted a delegation—headed by Colonel Apis who, a few months earlier, had formed the secret organisation ‘The Black Hand’ (Crna Ruka). Apis was sent by Serbia’s Prime Minister Nikola Pašić with the proposal that Serbia would fully support an Albanian insurrection against the Porte if they agreed to join Serbia after the region was liberated.<sup>565</sup>

The Serbian and Montenegrin governments agreed to supply the Albanian insurgents with a certain amount of arms, but no political agreement or military alliance was reached. Although they did not manage to secure the support of the Great Powers, the Albanians of Malësia (the northern mountains) began their insurrection in March 1911. Their proclaimed aims were self-government, for Albanian schools to be maintained by the Porte and for Albanian soldiers to serve only in Albania<sup>566</sup> but the insurrection failed to spread

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<sup>562</sup> Arnavutluk İhtilali Komitesi Katibi ünvanı verilen Nikola İvanaj, HR. SYS. 140 9 1911 06 06 5.

<sup>563</sup> Korrespondenca e personaliteteve shqiptare, AQSH, F.2, V.1911, D.73, N. 13.

<sup>564</sup> Kondis, p. 51.

<sup>565</sup> Petrit Imami, *Srbi i Albanci Kroz Vekove* (Beograd: Samizdat B92, 1999), pp. 186-193.

<sup>566</sup> Anamali and Prifti, p. 446.

across the country and as such did not achieve its goals. Although the Albanian leaders did not succeed in widening the insurrection, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro increasingly saw the Albanian efforts for autonomy as a threat to their own national aspirations. For this reason, these three governments saw the Albanian efforts for autonomy as a common problem and would soon take joint action.<sup>567</sup>

The Young Turks sought to show the Powers that the Porte was in control of its Balkan territories and that the situation in most parts of Albania was peaceful. To this end, the Sultan visited these two regions in June 1911 in an effort to restore Ottoman prestige, stop the uprising and reach a reconciliation with the Albanians.<sup>568</sup>

The Sultan and the Young Turks were aware that the internationalisation of the Albanian Question would create a problem for the Porte and they were therefore determined to demonstrate that the Macedonian and Albanian Questions were simply internal matters. When the Sultan arrived in Skopje, he praised the Young Turks for their contribution to bringing ethnic groups closer. However, as was revealed in Skopje, the main aim of the Sultan's visit was to tend to the Albanians and the territories inhabited by them. The Sultan was pleased to see around 5000 Albanians cheering his visit in Skopje, yet historian Erik Zürcher notes that the Young Turks made a considerable effort to 'engineer this Albanian enthusiasm'.<sup>569</sup>

Visiting dominions was not part of the Ottoman monarchic tradition, but the time had come to make exceptions.<sup>570</sup> The CUP propaganda had widely publicised the visit beforehand. The CUP press published a statement reminding the population that the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was a Christian crusade against Muslims which aimed to expel the Ottomans from Europe. Now the Muslims were asked to show up in great numbers to honour and follow Sultan Murat's example. The CUP press announced that 300,000 Albanians were expected to take part in the prayer ceremony which would be led by the

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<sup>567</sup> Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge 2002), p. 9.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

<sup>569</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I B Tauris, 2012), p. 89.

<sup>570</sup> Erik-Jan Zürcher, 'Kosovo Revisited: Sultan Reşad's Macedonian Journey of June 1911', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 35. 4 (1999), pp. 26-39 (31) <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4284038>> [accessed 19 October 2015] - Until the seventeenth century, Sultans had personally commanded military campaigns. One of the Sultans who commanded a battle in 1389 in Kosovo was Sultan Murat I who was killed there. The present Sultan (Reşad) visited Sultan Murat's tomb, located in the battlefield which took place in Fushë Kosovë (Kosovo Polje) near Prishtina.



Sultan. The British consul in Skopje guessed that the number of participants would be 100,000. In reality the number of Albanians that attended the ceremony was several times lower than the British consul predicted. After the ceremony a declaration by the Grand Vizier was read out but, since it was not translated into Albanian, few seemed to have understood it.<sup>571</sup>

The Young Turks had hoped to rebuild their damaged ties with the Albanians and reach a reconciliation with their leaders but none of the Albanian leaders attended the ceremony or wished to meet the Sultan. The Sultan's visit took place without incident. According to the British Embassy in Constantinople it ended as 'an unqualified success'.<sup>572</sup> Yet, the Sultan's visit did not achieve its political purpose. However, at the same time, the visit also showed that some Albanians still believed in the Young Turks and were faithful to the Sultan. One such example is Nijazi Bey, the Young Turk hero, who had organised the entire journey and was in charge of the security of the Sultan.<sup>573</sup>

Despite the political failings of the visit with regard to the Albanian Question, the Sultan and the Young Turks did manage to strengthen relations with the Serbs. Although it was expected that the visit would anger the Serbs, who considered Kosovo as sacred and important to their national identity, on this occasion they saw the Ottomans as friends and the Albanians as the source of danger. The Sultan's visit seemed to have attracted the interest of the Serbian crown prince and he planned to hold a meeting with the Sultan in Skopje. However, the meeting did not take place as the Serbian prince had to go to London to attend the coronation of King George V. In Prishtina, under the organisation of the Serbian consul Milan Rakić, a large crowd of local Serbs had gathered to honour the Sultan. Even the choir of the Serbian Orthodox seminary sang for the Sultan.<sup>574</sup> On his way back, the Sultan stopped in Manastir to visit the base of the Third Army and during the three nights of his stay the town was illuminated by the Serbian community. In Salonika the

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<sup>571</sup> Malcolm, *Kosovo*, p. 244; Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>572</sup> David Gillard, ed., *British Documents in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 20 – The Ottoman Empire under the Young Turks 1908-1914* (University Publications of America, 1985), p. 302.

<sup>573</sup> Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, p. 92.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 90-91.

Sultan hosted an official dinner in order to 'honour the Serbian delegation which had come to pay its respects'.<sup>575</sup>

Serbia publicly appeared as a friend of the Porte but secretly was preparing for war. Only a few months after the Sultan's visit to Macedonia and Kosovo, Serbia and Bulgaria reached a military agreement against the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. The mutual agreement, signed in March 1912, recognised Serbian interests in Kosovo and Albania, and Bulgarian interests in Thrace, demonstrating that interest in Macedonia and Albania was increasing. If the programme of autonomy for Macedonia was to fail, then both countries would partition the region. Bulgaria would take southern Macedonia while Serbia would take the north. Skopje, then the capital of the *vilayet* of Kosovo, was considered as a disputed zone on which the Russians would act as arbitrators.<sup>576</sup> This bilateral understanding was later supported by Montenegro and Greece and, after another series of agreements, the Balkan League was formed by the end of 1912.

From the perspective of the Young Turks, the uprising and the failure of the Sultan's visit made them consider the Albanian national requests more seriously. During the CUP Annual Congress, which was held in Salonika at the end of September and beginning of October 1911, the Young Turks made a secret decision regarding the Albanian Question. In the future the Albanians were to be allowed to use their language but it was also decided that a number of *hojas* (Muslim priests) would be sent to open schools in Albania and propagate against the Latin alphabet that the Albanians had adopted. The Young Turks decided to help strengthen Albanian nationalism but they only did this in order to weaken Greek nationalism, evidence of which can be seen through their decision to support Christian Orthodox Albanians wishing to separate from the Greek Church. Prayers in Albanian, which were not allowed in Greek Churches, were to be promoted. The list of decisions taken during the Congress regarding the Albanian Question was long and was regarded by a British diplomatic report as a way of 'fostering and spreading hatred' against the Greeks and their Orthodox Church.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>575</sup> Zürcher, *Kosovo Revisited*, pp. 26-39.

<sup>576</sup> Hall, p. 11.

<sup>577</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 20*, pp. 296-297.

Although the Albanian leaders failed to organise a general uprising, their attempt alarmed the Powers and neighbouring states. The failure of the uprising demonstrated that the Albanians lacked a strong and united leadership but Albanian leaders did manage to draft and distribute their political program to the international arena. On 23 June 1911 in Greça, a village in northern Albania, under the leadership of Ismail Qemali and Luigj Gurakuqi (1879-1925), an intellectual and patriot, a memorandum was distributed to the consular and diplomatic representatives of the Powers in Montenegro. Two of the main requests of the memorandum were autonomy and the recognition of Albanians as a nation.<sup>578</sup> The memorandum, which became known as the '12 Points Memorandum', had considerable resonance in the European and British press.

#### Changes in British and Austro-Hungarian policy

At the beginning of 1911 the British government continued to disregard Albanian efforts to fulfil their national ambitions and instead paid considerable attention to the situation which reappeared in Macedonia. Noel Buxton, the Chairman of the Balkan Committee, had visited Macedonia and in an interview published in the *Daily News* gave a grim outlook for the region. Noel Buxton also published a letter with similar views in *The Times*.<sup>579</sup> As a result of several more articles of this nature, Macedonia came up as a matter to be discussed in the British Parliament. Macedonia also became a subject matter between Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and British diplomats in London. Although these incidents created a bad impression about the Porte's rule, Ottoman diplomats hoped that this would not change Britain's 'positive attitude towards the Sublime Porte'. The Ottomans also hoped that the situation would not give a pretext to any of the powers wishing to 'exploit incidents' in Macedonia.<sup>580</sup> However, Albanians in Macedonia and their activity in northern Albania, where they were engaged in preparing an insurrection, were not seen as dangerous acts and, therefore, not discussed in the British Parliament nor by the diplomats.

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<sup>578</sup> Prifti, p. 450.

<sup>579</sup> Sinan Kunalp and Gül Tokay, eds., *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One – Macedonian Issue 1879-1912, Vol. II* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011), pp. 445-446.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid, p. 447.

In London, the press gave priority to British-Ottoman trade relations which were also of concern to the British government. After the Baghdad railway concessions were given to the Germans, Edward Grey was not happy but told the press that he expected a fair trade treatment within the Ottoman Empire and to safeguard the dominant position in the Persian Gulf.<sup>581</sup> The British and Ottoman members of both parliaments believed that the two countries were nourishing a good relationship. In June 1911 an Ottoman parliamentary delegation led by two well-known politicians and intellectuals, Riza Tevfik Bey and Suleiman Bustani, took part in the Universal Races Congress held in London. The Ottoman delegation was hosted by the Eastern Association whose aim was to promote inter-race relations.<sup>582</sup> The guests were welcomed by Lord Weardale, chair of the Association, who said that they had every sympathy for the efforts being made to improve the Ottoman Empire and praised the work of the Young Turks. Admiral Fremantle spoke about the support that the British government had offered to the Ottomans during the past century and added that the Ottomans could still count on British assistance.<sup>583</sup>

Earlier, in mid-June 1911, a British parliamentary delegation had visited the Ottoman Parliament and both parties agreed that the Young Turk policy was on the right track. In the House of Commons, the British delegation reported that the Albanian Question 'ought to be dealt with promptly and in the spirit of conciliation'. Although the Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox had joined in resisting the Porte, the speaker of the House of Commons did not believe that the Albanians desired separation from the Ottoman government and 'under no circumstances could the [Ottoman] government submit to the dictation of others'. The Ottomans assured the British that the Albanian Question was not religious in nature since there was no fanaticism and Albanians were good Ottomans. When this sentence was heard in the House of Commons all members cheered loudly.<sup>584</sup> However, Lord Weardale, Admiral Fremantle and both parliamentary delegations were not aware that the Foreign Office and the British Government had started to change their policy

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<sup>581</sup> Lord Crew ile Lord Lansdowne'nin Bağdat demiryolu, HR.SYS. 109 22 1911 02 11 4.

<sup>582</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Critical Perspectives on Empire: Drawing the Global Colour Line* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 251.

<sup>583</sup> 'Ottoman Reform: Progress made by the by the Young Turks a Steady Revival', *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 July 1911, p. 4.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid.

towards the Porte. This change started to take root during the Albanian insurrection of 1911.

Initially, the Albanian insurrection of 1911 did not receive much attention in London. The reports that were sent to the Foreign Office from the British Embassy in Constantinople expressed hope or indeed confidence, that the Porte would be able to crush the Albanian insurgency. This view was similar to the one expressed in the Young Turk press which ignored the scale of the Albanian uprising. *Tanin*, the main Young Turk newspaper, argued that 'to speak of an Albanian question today is wrong' because the number of insurgents and the affected area was small compared with the whole of Albania and its total population.<sup>585</sup>

Initially the British government did not take a stance on this matter because it waited to see the reactions of Austria-Hungary and Italy. However in May 1911, when the uprising seemed to be spreading and reports began to appear in the press, the Foreign Office started to view the ability of the Porte with doubt and pessimism. The British view of Ottoman policy started to change, but not entirely in favour of the Albanians. The British government believed that the Young Turks should change their policy of Ottomanisation out of fear that Albanian rejection of the policy could spread the insurrection to other regions, thus threatening the empire with disintegration. When the uprising spread further to northern Albania, the British government started to show more attention to the reports being sent to the Foreign Office by Edith Durham. Their attention grew further still when reports were published by newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian*, many of which caused some trouble within the Foreign Office when some officials expressed their belief that Durham was deliberately spreading 'Turcophobia'.<sup>586</sup>

After the '12 Point Memorandum'<sup>587</sup> had reached the Foreign Office at the end of June, Albanian insurgents sent a letter to Edward Grey. Durham later wrote that 'I had not so much faith as they in British unselfishness, but said at any rate it could do no harm'.<sup>588</sup> In fact, the letter was actually drafted by a French journalist to which Durham made no major alterations, but suggested that it should not only be sent to Edward Grey but to all

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<sup>585</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 20*, p. 280.

<sup>586</sup> Heller, pp. 40-41.

<sup>587</sup> See: Memorandum, RAI, MS 55.

<sup>588</sup> Edith Durham, *Struggle for Scutari* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), pp. 54-57.

European newspapers. Despite her recommendation, the letter was sent to Grey in the form of a petition signed by the Albanian leaders and explained the difficult situation in Albania after the latest Ottoman actions. The petition called for international intervention and for a 'large autonomy' but was sent only to the British government, leaving the Powers to be informed through the press.<sup>589</sup>

Two other dispatches that were sent to the Foreign Office from Montenegro by British diplomats earlier that month seemed to have put pressure on Edward Grey. Grey was informed that the Albanian insurgents, advised by Ismail Qemali, would not surrender to the Porte without a guarantee from the Powers.<sup>590</sup> Other sources showed that the Montenegrin government was worried about the spread of the Albanian insurrection and did not favour the involvement of the British government in the Albanian case. On this matter Grey pointed out that 'the alternative of doing nothing may lead to a situation in the Balkans that may be very disagreeable.'<sup>591</sup>

Therefore, Grey decided to act and deal with the Albanian request believing that the petition which had been addressed to the Foreign Office was public property. He saw no need to conceal it from the public. He maintained that the Ottoman government should express readiness to meet the wishes of the Albanians. Yet he also thought that it was possible that other Powers, specifically Austria-Hungary, may not be pleased by the fact that the Albanians had appealed to the British government for help. Hence, Grey felt that the British government should not deal with this matter on its own and decided to involve all the Powers. He ordered his ambassadors in Vienna, Paris, St. Petersburg, Rome and Berlin to ask the respective governments for a joint representation to the Porte.<sup>592</sup> Ambassadors were also told to inform the foreign ministers of these Powers that the British government agreed with the Albanian request for limited autonomy, but, in order to make things easier for the Powers, emphasised that the Albanians did not request independence. However, Grey also wrote that the British proposal was limited to 'an endeavour to induce the Powers to obtain guarantees of non-molestation in the event of the Albanians surrendering their arms'. Grey added:

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<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>590</sup> Douglas to Grey, 19 June 1911, NA, FO, 289G8/14/12/44, Nr. 21.

<sup>591</sup> Grey to de Salis, 24 June 1911, NA, FO, 24187/14/11/44, Nr. 114.

<sup>592</sup> Grey to de Salis, 26 June 1911, NA, FO, 24519/14/11/44, No. 115.

We might go a step further and suggest that the Porte should be asked to give assurances that the amnesty will be general and that the requests of the Albanians in respect to the language and school questions as well as to improvement of communications be granted.<sup>593</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, the Russians supported Grey's plan. Neratow, the acting Russian foreign minister, told O'Beirne, the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, that he doubted whether the Albanians would be satisfied with less than full autonomy but agreed to join the British proposal. O'Beirne suggested that Vienna might take actions on its own if the Albanian insurrection continued because of the pressure which was being built by the Austro-Hungarian press. Neratow, claiming to have further information, assured O'Beirne that the Austro-Hungarians would not take up arms on behalf of the Albanians and would rather employ diplomatic means.<sup>594</sup>

While Austria-Hungary and Italy also joined Britain and Russia, this was not the case with Germany and France. The German government thought that Grey's proposal was based on 'good grounds tending to preserve peace' but felt that such a proposal constituted an interference in internal Ottoman affairs which would lead to a 'policy of intervention which died out with the old regime'. Thus, the Germans maintained that collective interventions would harm the Porte and would encourage 'unruly elements in Albania' and so the answer from Berlin was negative.<sup>595</sup> By early July, Lowther told Grey that the French ambassador in Constantinople expressed strong disagreement with the British proposal. The French rejected the proposal for the same reasons as the Germans and, in addition, maintained that there was little point supporting the British initiative if the Germans had already refused it.

Lowther also had reason to believe that the Germans had informed the Ottomans about Grey's initiative for Albanian autonomy, even though it was supposed to be secret.<sup>596</sup> Despite the fact that any joint representation of the Powers did not intend to request full autonomy for the Albanians, it was interpreted as a step towards such goal by the Porte and was therefore greeted with annoyance. More importantly, this moment was a pivotal

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<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>594</sup> O'Beirne to Grey, 28 June 1911, NA, FO, 25702/14/11/44, No. 183.

<sup>595</sup> De Salis to Grey, 28 June 1911, NA, FO, 25261/14/11/44, No. 501.

<sup>596</sup> Lowther to Grey, 2 July 1911, NA, FO, 25647/14/11/44, No. 151.

step in the British government's abandonment of its friendly policy towards the Porte. The initiative on behalf of the Albanians led the Ottomans to distance themselves from the British and seek closer relations with the Germans.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1911, when the insurrection was about to collapse, some of the Albanian leaders, headed by Hasan Prishtina, did not give up their hope. Prishtina, like all other Albanian leaders, was not aware of Grey's secret diplomatic efforts that had ended without success. Therefore in late July, Prishtina approached the British consulate in Skopje for help telling vice consul Hugh that Albanian leaders were about to widen the insurrection and would listen to any advice the British government would offer.<sup>597</sup> The British advice for Hasan Prishtina was that the Albanian leaders should approach the Porte to address their problems by 'peaceful means'. 'A general uprising,' as Lowther wrote, would be unfavourable to the Albanians.<sup>598</sup>

In autumn 1911 the chairman of the Macedonian Relief Fund, the well-known British journalist and war correspondent in the Balkans, Henry W. Nevinson, visited north Albania and published an article about the villages which had suffered under the latest Ottoman military intervention. Not counting the victims, he estimated that 1,800 houses were destroyed, which in turn meant that around 15,000 people were made homeless.<sup>599</sup> Articles describing the difficult situation in north Albania and the mistreatment of Catholic Albanians by the Young Turk government were numerous and seemed to have created an impact on governments.<sup>600</sup> It is worth emphasising that European governments and the press showed an interest in such events primarily because the Albanian Catholics were Christians who were seen as suffering from Ottoman persecution. The religious dimension of the situation was still considered important, following the longstanding trend of interpreting Balkan affairs through the prism of religion as outlined in chapter 1.

The Albanian uprising was not interpreted as an Ottoman or Albanian victory but it changed the British position towards the Near Eastern question. This change meant that, in the future, pessimistic reports about the Porte would become more acceptable by the British

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<sup>597</sup> Shefqet Zekolli, ed., *Veprimtaria e Hasan Prishtinës – Dokumente* (Shkup: Instituti i Trashëgimisë Shpirtërore dhe Kulturore i Shqiptarëve, 2012), pp. 47-48; Hugh to Lowther, ? September 1911, NA, FO, 371/123, Nr. 41.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid, p. 49; Lowther to Grey, 28 September 1911, NA, FO, 371/12/123, Nr. 659.

<sup>599</sup> 'The Distress in Albania', *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1911, p. 10.

<sup>600</sup> Jön Türklerin Katolik Arnavutlara, HR. SYS, 148 37 1911 07 19 3.



government.<sup>601</sup> However, such reports did not necessarily help the Albanian national movement. Apart from Durham's reports, there was other pessimistic information which originated in Serbia and was influencing opinion in the Foreign Office. One such example was the 'prognosis' of the Serbian Prime Minister Milovanović, who maintained that the internal collapse of the Ottoman Empire would come soon.

Throughout 1909 Milovanović had developed an idea with regard to the 'Sanjak and the Albanian problem', as he called it, and had informed British diplomats about it on many occasions. On this subject Milovanović told Cartwright, the British ambassador in Vienna, that 'the Ottoman power has disappeared in Europe.' Milovanović was hoping to obtain the consent of Austria-Hungary to a cession to Serbia of the 'Sanjak with a strip of territory to the sea to the north of Albania.'<sup>602</sup> A year later, in 1910, Milovanović told Cartwright that public opinion in the Balkans was in a 'state of fermentation, and that a general restlessness existed among the various races.' Milovanović had also revealed a plan which bore some resemblance to the attack later on the Ottoman Empire. On this Cartwright wrote:

Milovanovitch's policy, if not very noble, is prudent. It consists in truckling to Turkey in spite of all the barbarity which the Turks may inflict on Servians in Macedonia, until the moment arrives when, Turkey being in difficulties with Greece, Servia with Bulgaria and perhaps Roumania, can fall on her flank and despoil her of Macedonia. He has no high opinion either of the Turkish army or of the new regime.<sup>603</sup>

In 1911 Milovanović went further by suggesting that the break-up of the Ottoman Empire should be 'followed by a general attack upon the European provinces'. Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, accepted Milovanović's 'prediction' and wrote to Lowther:

I daresay it is not far from what may take place. Personally I should view with great equanimity the break-up of the Turkish regime and Turkish Empire in Europe. I have no desire to see either consolidated, for I consider that were they

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<sup>601</sup> Heller, p. 41.

<sup>602</sup> Cartwright to Grey, 17 August 1909, NA, FO, 371/779, Nr. 134.

<sup>603</sup> Cartwright to Grey, 12 August 1910, NA, FO, 371/1013, Nr. 137.

to become strong they could be a menace to every Power with Muhamedan subjects, and specially to us who hold Egypt and India.<sup>604</sup>

As Heller pointed out, Nicolson was contributing greatly to the Foreign Office's rapid change of position by imposing the most pessimistic view about the future of the Ottoman Empire. Influenced by Milovanović, it was obvious who Nicolson and the Foreign Office would favour in the future. This change in British policy was also seen in September 1911 during the Italian invasion of Libya. Nicolson expressed the official British view in a private letter that he sent to Cartwright:

It seems to me exceedingly foolish that we should displease a country with whom we have always been on the friendly terms and whose friendship to us is very great value, in order to keep well with Turkey, who has been a source of great annoyance to us and whose government is in one of the worst that can well be imagined. I should far prefer having Italy as a neighbour to Egypt than the Turks.<sup>605</sup>

Nicolson wrote that the British attitude towards the Italian invasion of Libya 'will be one of complete neutrality'. With such a step he explained the intention of preserving Egypt as a dominion of the British. He considered it a disastrous step if Italy or Austria-Hungary were to decide to land on the Albanian coast without mutual agreement. He did not want to speculate on such a situation because he felt that things were moving too fast and affecting the status quo in the Balkans.<sup>606</sup>

The change in policy was noted by the annual report issued at the end of 1911 by the British Embassy in Constantinople. According to the report, the relationship between the Ottomans and the British during 1911 'was not a very friendly one'.<sup>607</sup> The report also recognised that the Baghdad railway and the Albanian question were the two main issues that characterised relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire. Regarding the troubles and brutalities that occurred during the insurrection in Albania, Lowther wrote: 'we were not slow to point them out, and, did not minimise them'. It seemed that Ottoman

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<sup>604</sup> As cited in Heller, p. 42.

<sup>605</sup> Gooch and Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914, Vol. IX, The Balkan Wars* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), pp. 297-298.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 20*, p. 305.

officials were not happy with the British, who criticised the manner in which the Porte had dealt with the Albanian uprising. 'It is difficult for Turks to understand that they cannot use their weapons they choose to exact taxation and to punish the rebellion', added Lowther. In this regard, a prominent Ottoman statesman told Lowther:

From a recent journey in England I came to understand your attitude more than I had done hitherto. You do not so much resent our using strong measures against a recalcitrant population [the Albanians] which refuses to pay taxes and do military service and you realise that in quelling the rebellions that ensure innocent people must suffer and villages may be burned. But, what you will not tolerate is that when your eye witness have seen these things occur we should deny that they ever took place.<sup>608</sup>

However, the British diplomats marked the relations between the Porte and Serbia as being excellent, although the report also noted that the 'doctrine of equality of races' was constantly affirmed by the Young Turk government in theory but 'constantly ignored in practice'.<sup>609</sup>

Although Vienna was keeping its distance from the Albanian uprising, most of the European Powers, including the Balkan countries and specifically Serbia, expressed concerns about 'Austrian intrigue in Albania'. In September 1911 Milovanović told Edward Goschen, the British ambassador in Berlin, that he was convinced 'that Austria was at the bottom of the Albanian troubles'.<sup>610</sup> A few months later, Milovanović also told the British consul in Belgrade that Austria-Hungary was to be blamed for the uprising of the Albanians against the Porte. As a matter of fact, it was Serbia that was heavily involved in causing troubles around the border of Albania. Serbian officers were killed on many occasions at the border by Ottoman troops, but Milovanović denied the involvement of his government. A British diplomat, explaining Serbian involvement, wrote:

Servian [Serbian] authorities have connections with some of the leaders and there are many Servian [Serbian] emissaries at work in Old Servia [Kosovo]. The

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<sup>608</sup> Ibid, pp. 306-311.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid, p. 300.

<sup>610</sup> Goschen to Grey, 8 September 1911, NA, FO, 35611/14, Nr. 262.

idea seems to be to prepare the ground and to establish relations with the bands and people in case events should lead to a Servian [Serbian] advance.<sup>611</sup>

Earlier, during the Macedonian crisis, the Serbian government had sponsored armed Serbian bands in Macedonia and Kosovo. However, the support that Serbia offered to the Serbs during 1912 was not only to create obstacles to reforms in Macedonia but also to prepare an invasion, as suggested by the above report.

The Austro-Hungarian government did not support the Albanian insurrection of 1911 and this had angered the Albanians, particularly the Catholics. The Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra 'begged the Albanians to remain quiet only for two more years'. He promised them that they would be free if they would wait. Although this promise was encouraging, in a letter which was delivered to the Foreign Office through Henry Nevinson, Durham noted that most of the Albanians had 'had enough of Austria'.<sup>612</sup> Even the Archbishop was very bitter with the Austro-Hungarian consul stationed in Shkodra because he believed that Vienna had betrayed the Albanian Catholics more than once.<sup>613</sup>

The diplomats in Cetinje and Shkodra were convinced that the Porte was trying to satisfy Albanian demands out of fear that they would appeal to Vienna for intervention.<sup>614</sup> In reality, at this stage, most of the Albanian leaders had ceased believing in Vienna. Furthermore, in the region of Shkodra, the arrival of many refugees from Bosnia led anti-Austro-Hungarian feelings to grow strong. At the beginning of 1912, northern Albanians were ready to rise against the Porte again and were waiting for the rebellion to start in Kosovo, Macedonia and southern Albania. However, the beginning of 1912 also brought changes in Austro-Hungarian policy, and Vienna would soon assume a supportive role towards the Albanians. Although it is likely that the changes came because, by the end of February 1912, it was becoming more evident that Albanians would soon renew conflict with the Porte, the plans of the Balkan League were arguably a more important factor in

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<sup>611</sup> Paget to Grey, 9 May 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 75.

<sup>612</sup> Durham to Foreign Office, 28 December 1911, NA, FO, 195/2406.

<sup>613</sup> See: Durham's letter to Nevinson, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 15231.

<sup>614</sup> Lamb to Lowther, 21 January 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 11.

bringing about such changes.<sup>615</sup> Vienna believed that the Albanian Question was becoming an international issue and one in which they had to take part.

In November 1897, Austria-Hungary and Italy had agreed, in principle, to support an autonomous or independent Albania if the Ottoman Empire collapsed.<sup>616</sup> Regarding this agreement, at the beginning of 1910 the British ambassador in Paris told Grey that there was 'some form of agreement between Austria and Italy relating to Albania' and added: 'It is, I believe, a self-denying protocol.'<sup>617</sup> Due to the importance of the Adriatic Sea, both powers were competing to prevent the other from gaining a dominant position in Albania. In this agreement they had reached an understanding not to occupy Albania and not to allow any other power to set foot on Albanian soil. Both governments agreed that if the Porte was to lose Macedonia, they would create an autonomous Albania under the sovereignty of the Porte or as an independent principality.<sup>618</sup>

The question was, when should Vienna and Rome consider that the Ottoman Empire was collapsing? Since the moment of collapse was not certain, neither Vienna nor Rome approached Albanian leaders to notify them about their agreement in support of an independent Albania. Until spring 1912 Austria-Hungary and Italy, as well as all other European Powers, did not think that the frequent rebellions of the Albanians would bring the collapse of Ottoman rule. They considered the Albanian insurrections to be local in character and directed only against taxes, despotic rule or changes of specific functionaries. The uprising of 1911 was viewed in the same way, even though the rebels' main request was autonomy.

#### From Autonomy to Independence

After the failure of the uprising of 1911 and when it became clear that the Porte was not endorsing the '12 Point Memorandum,' two of the most prominent Albanian leaders and members of the Ottoman Parliament, Hasan Prishtina and Ismail Qemali, met secretly in Constantinople to discuss the situation. At the beginning of January 1912, they agreed to

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<sup>615</sup> Lamb to Lowther, 23 February 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 28.

<sup>616</sup> Kondis, p. 31.

<sup>617</sup> Bertie to Grey, 24 February 1910, NA, FO, 371/1003.6492/5019/10/44A, Nr. 13.

<sup>618</sup> Kondis, p. 31.

organise a general uprising against the Porte with the aim of securing autonomy for Albania. They also agreed to engage several Albanian personalities in drafting and implementing the plan.<sup>619</sup> Thus they invited Esat Pasha Toptani, Myfid Bey Libohova (1876–1927), Aziz Pasha Vrioni (1859–1919) and Syrja Bey Vlora (1860–1940) for a secret meeting which was held in Taksim in Constantinople. All were prominent Albanian personalities and, most importantly, they came from different parts of Albania so that through them the four Albanian *vilayets* were represented. The four agreed to start a general uprising and all shared the role of finding money, buying arms, as well as forming and leading armed groups in their regions. Ismail Bey Qemali took the duty of presenting the Taksim decision diplomatically by contacting the foreign ministries of European governments and asking for their political and diplomatic support.<sup>620</sup>

The Ottoman government seemed to have discovered some aspects of this plan and, in order to diffuse the situation, sent Interior Minister, Kyoprolu, to Kosovo. Kyoprolu arrived in Skopje on 10 March 1912 but no Albanian leader came to meet him, nor did anyone receive him when he proceeded further north to Kosovo. The Ottoman minister was mysteriously ambushed on three occasions on his way from Prizren to Shkodra and, though he survived all three attempts on his life, several of his armed escorts were killed.<sup>621</sup> However, the Young Turk press in Constantinople, as well as the Minister's telegrams, said that the Albanians had given him an excellent reception.<sup>622</sup>

After several other armed incidents occurred, the four leaders decided to publicise their plan and ask for foreign support. The first power to be approached was Britain. In April 1912, Hasan Prishtina went again to the British Consulate in Skopje. Prishtina revealed the 'Taksim Agreement' to the British Consul who reported to London:

He aspired to complete fiscal and military separation and to an Albanian republic whose connection with the Porte should be merely nominal [...] He cited the

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<sup>619</sup> Anamali and Prifti, p. 461.

<sup>620</sup> Hasan Prishtina, *Nji shkurtim kujtimesh mbi kryengritjen shqyptare 1912* (Prishtinë: Rrokullia, 2010), pp. 10–12.

<sup>621</sup> Crackanthorpe to Grey, 2 October 1913, NA, FO, 421/287, Nr. 1, Enclosure Nr. 20.

<sup>622</sup> Peckham to Lamb, 24 February 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 12; Peckham to Lamb, 10 March 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 15; Peckham to Lamb, 22 March 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 20.

parallel of Bulgarian population since the Treaty of Berlin. The suzerainty of the Porte would be accepted.<sup>623</sup>

The British Consul received the new plan with scepticism. He reminded Prishtina that on previous occasions the Albanians of the north 'did not show much national cohesion,' but Prishtina assured him that this time the situation was different and Albanians had come under 'complete organisation from Shkodra to Janina'. To the consul's amazement, Hasan Prishtina also said that this time the Albanians were so well prepared that Kosovo and Macedonia would fall into their hands within weeks, while Salonika would follow within a month. When the consul asked if the Albanians had arms and artillery, Prishtina answered that they had none, but they would capture these from the Ottoman Army. This prophesy almost proved to be true, as Kosovo and most parts of Macedonia did fall under Albanian control by August 1912. However, Hasan Prishtina was wrong to predict international involvement in the plan and misread the intentions of the Powers and neighbouring countries. He had hoped that Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary would abstain from interference by regarding the Albanian insurrection not as an international problem but as an internal matter of the Porte. However, in the event that things went wrong, Hasan Prishtina said that Austro-Hungarian rule over Albania would be preferable but 'the most desirable of all would be British.'<sup>624</sup> As in many other cases before, Hasan Prishtina once again showed that Albanian leaders preferred British patronage over that of all other Powers.

Hasan Prishtina asked for political support from the British government and said that financial support would also be needed after the start of the uprising. Prishtina told the consul that the Albanians would not start the uprising before they received an answer from London. A few days later the British government responded to Prishtina's request: 'England had no interest in Balkan issues'. In his memoirs, Prishtina interpreted the British response as meaning that 'England was neither for nor against an Albanian uprising'.<sup>625</sup> However, the Albanian leaders believed that the Ottoman and Serbian mail system was not secure, and so the British consulate in Skopje offered some help in communication between Albanian

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<sup>623</sup> Peckham to Lamb, 28 April 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 31.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Hasan Prishtina, *A Brief Memoir of the Albanian Rebellion of 1912* (Prishtinë: Rrokullia, 2010), p. 17.

leaders. The vice consul agreed to receive a letter from Hasan Prishtina and to deliver it to Ismail Qemali.<sup>626</sup>

The meeting between Hasan Prishtina and the British consul took place almost a month after Serbia and Bulgaria had signed their secret treaty of alliance and friendship on 13 March. Bax-Ironside, the British ambassador in Sofia, had warned the Foreign Office about secret talks between the two countries but the British government did not pay much attention to this information. For about a month, even Lowther in Constantinople had no information about this important event. Only in May 1912 did Nicolson discover, through the British Embassy in St Petersburg, that the Bulgarian-Serbian treaty was a serious matter and that the two signatories intended to carve up Macedonia. Even then, Nicolson was confident that no trouble would occur in the Balkans in 1912,<sup>627</sup> an opinion which most likely contributed to his response to Hasan Prishtina that 'England had no interest in Balkan issues'.

It is hard to confirm whether the Albanian leaders knew about the details of the Bulgarian-Serbian alliance, but it is certain that they had some information because they hurried to start the insurrection in May 1912. *Yeni Asr*, a newspaper in Salonika, published a manifesto which was sent by Ismail Qemali who was active in helping to organise the insurgency in south Albania. The manifesto contained the demand for autonomy and was directed at the Ottoman government and at readers in Macedonia.<sup>628</sup>

At this point the Russian government supported the Albanian request for autonomy because it was seen as a good opportunity for introducing further reforms in Macedonia. The Russians even asked for the support of the British for a new scheme of reforms, hoping that this would keep Serbia and Bulgaria quiet. Grey did not agree to this proposal as he still believed that 'justice and good government' was all that Macedonia needed. Although the British government had started to change its supportive policy towards the Porte, it still favoured a non-interventionist approach in Ottoman internal affairs.<sup>629</sup> The existing situation and the British government's position was further supported by the British press,

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<sup>626</sup> Zekolli, p. 58. -The vice consul told Grey that he received the letter although he did not know the whereabouts of Ismail Bey Qemali and what the letter contained.

<sup>627</sup> Heller, p. 57.

<sup>628</sup> Peckham to Lamb, 24 May 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 36.

<sup>629</sup> Heller, pp. 58-59.



with *The Times* and *The Spectator* praising the initiative to reorganise the gendarmerie in Macedonia and supporting the Porte's proposal to appoint five British officers who would contribute to keeping law and order. Furthermore, the British press ignored the Albanian uprising that started in 1912 and believed the uprising of the previous year to be highly exaggerated. It was only reforms that Albania and Macedonia needed, and according to *The Spectator*:

If all those reforms are honestly put into execution, Albania and Macedonia will be better countries to live in from the point of view of the higher civilisation. But the higher civilisation seems as yet to be little valued by those whom the [Ottoman] Minister of the Interior is anxious to win over. What is most esteemed, because most threatened, in Albania and Macedonia to-day is a much more elementary matter. It is a reasonable amount of protection for life and person.<sup>630</sup>

This article was published at a time when most Albanian towns were being attacked by Albanian rebel forces who, like all other Balkan nations, were not interested in reforms but in advancing their national aspirations. By that time, Kosovo had become the main battlefield, firstly because the majority of Ottoman troops were concentrated there and, secondly, because the entire *vilayet* of Kosovo and most of the *vilayet* of Manastir were marked by Albanian leaders as their territory and where the eastern border of the future Albanian state had to be placed.

In June 1912, a considerable part of Albania fell under the control of the Albanian insurgents. The leaders of the insurrection believed that it was time to further internationalise their cause by publically explaining their aims to the Powers and the Balkan countries. They issued a memorandum and sent a copy to the British consulate in Manastir explaining that:

- Albanians are firmly attached to the Fatherland;
- The flag of revolt is raised not only in the interest of Albania but to save the Fatherland from the fearful pit into which it has fallen;

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<sup>630</sup> Elsie and Destani, *Macedonian Question*, pp. 263-266.

- The Albanians have taken up arms because they see that the Young Turk Government and their policy will end sooner or later in a hostile invasion of the virgin soil of the Fatherland.<sup>631</sup>

The memorandum was signed by 19 leaders, mainly from Kosovo, including Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Isa Boletini and Riza Gjakova. The aim of the leaders was to show that not only Albania but the whole Ottoman Empire was facing an invasion by Balkan armies. The leaders, some still loyal to the Porte, used the term 'Fatherland' for the Ottoman Empire because they still needed political support from Constantinople and from the army stationed in Kosovo and Macedonia. The memorandum seemed to have created a positive effect. By the end of June, desertions of Albanian soldiers and officers from the Ottoman army were rife in Kosovo. In Macedonia the majority of Ottoman officers may have not shared the Albanians' nationalistic views, but they supported Albania's demands. Sympathy for the Albanians within the army was growing steadily while morale was declining.<sup>632</sup>

Another memorandum followed from Shkodra, demanding an Albanian National Assembly and a government which would independently control its finances and its territorial (armed) force. With this, it looked like the Albanians had put forward three different sets of political demands, coming from three different organisations and different areas of Albania. But, the demands showed a degree of consistency among the Albanian nationalists in their request for autonomy. However, the leaders, being anti-Young Turk, also accommodated requests from those conservatives who supported the Hamidian regime such as reinstating old privileges, were in fact demands for reversing the situation. Lowther, explaining this 'confusion' to Grey, wrote:

A common theme also is the recognition of Albanian nationality to be attained through the establishment of Albanian schools, the case of Albanian language, the recognition of local customs, and the practise of regional military service. If, however, the unanimity of the purpose shown in the three sets of demands is illustrative of a real unity in Albanian nationalism, the divergences which exist

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<sup>631</sup> Enclosure in Vice Consul's Report, 28 June 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 43.

<sup>632</sup> Ramiz Abdylj, *Kryengritja e përgjithshme e vitit 1912 dhe lëvizja e oficerëve* (Prishtinë: Arkivi Kombëtar i Kosovës – Vjetar XXVII-XXVIII, 2002), p. 199.

between them are equally indicative of the different interpretations put upon the meaning of their nationality.<sup>633</sup>

While the insurrection was taking place in July, Grey wrote that in London Ismail Bey Qemali met Grujić, the Serbian *Chargé d'Affaires*, whom he told that 'Albania was solid' and the Albanians were 'determined this time to see the thing through.' Grujić must have met Ismail Qemali elsewhere, as there is no evidence of Qemali visiting London or Britain in 1912. Nevertheless, Grujić told the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Onslow, that the Serbian government was not inclined to share Ismail Qemali's view. Grey added that the Serbs regarded the Albanian insurrection as a primarily anti-Young Turk movement and, therefore they 'were not inclined to attach a great deal of importance to it.'<sup>634</sup> This was the line taken by Serbian diplomats in public who would not hesitate to deny the existence of the Albanian nationality, but in reality the Serbian government was seriously worried about the Albanian insurrection against the Ottoman regime.

At the same time, the insurrection in Kosovo was spreading widely and with great speed. Since the leaders in Kosovo were playing the main role in the uprising, they were able to impose their own conservative views upon the movement, a factor which represented an obstacle for the nationalist majority. By end of July, the town of Prishtina became the centre of the movement with a force of 30,000 armed Albanians led by Hasan Prishtina, Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri and Riza Gjakova. As they grew stronger, they put forward more demands, including the resignation of the Ottoman government and the dissolution of the Parliament. A section of the movement even demanded the abdication of the Sultan. By the beginning of August, most of Kosovo was controlled by the insurgents and out of a total of 67 Ottoman battalions stationed in the area, 38 joined the insurgents. New Ottoman troops were brought from Asia but it was too late to change the situation, many began joining the Albanians or deserted and went back home.<sup>635</sup>

Under the pressure of events, the government in Constantinople resigned on 22 July 1912. The resignation proved that Albanian leaders were well organised and had achieved success. Explaining the effect of this successful organisation, Lowther wrote:

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<sup>633</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 20*, pp. 393-394.

<sup>634</sup> Grey to Paget, 15 July 1912, NA, FO, 29599/2031/12/44, Nr. 10.

<sup>635</sup> Enclosure in Consul-General Lamb's Dispatch, NA, FO, 195/2407, Nr. 97; Peckham to Lamb, 5 August 1912, NA, FO, 195/2407, Nr. 62.

The 1912 rising is, moreover, exceptional, in that its conspicuous success was due to the fact that it was organised by men of far greater ability than were the leaders of former movements, by men who succeeded in affecting a combination with the military elements opposed to the Committee Cabinet - a combination which paralysed the action of the government and in the end effectively secured its fall.<sup>636</sup>

However, at this stage, the change of government in Constantinople did not mean much for the insurgents in Albania. Albanian autonomy, being the main request, was not considered an option even by the new government. The insurrection was also complicating the situation in Macedonia and this in turn caused worries in Vienna, leading the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Count Leopold Berchtold, to contact the British government and propose the 'political decentralisation of Albania'. The British rejected the proposal and Grey, again, reaffirmed his position that Albania needed a 'good government with special arrangement'.<sup>637</sup>

The denial of autonomy led the insurgents to move southwards to Macedonia, to occupy more territory and intensify the pressure. On 11 August, a group of 200 Albanian fighters entered Skopje and occupied the main town square. There was no reaction from the Ottoman army or administration. The next day 6000 more insurgents arrived. By 15 August, the number of insurgents that had entered Skopje reached 30,000. The Ottoman army did not even come out of its barracks, meaning there was no opposition to the takeover. In the national history of Albania, 15 August 1912 has entered as the date of the liberation of Skopje.<sup>638</sup>

This fact forced the Porte to endorse most of the Albanian terms which were known as the '14 Points Demand'. Macedonia was now at the mercy of the Albanian insurgents. There was nothing to stop them if they decided to move to Salonika since the Third Army stationed at Manastir, as well as other barracks on the way to Salonika, were ready to join the Albanians. But, a major misunderstanding occurred between those Albanian leaders who went to Skopje. Some of them, unsatisfied with autonomy, insisted on declaring independence, with Skopje as the capital. Conservatives, such as Isa Boletini and Riza

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<sup>636</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 20*, pp. 390-391.

<sup>637</sup> Heller, p. 67.

<sup>638</sup> Frashëri, *History of Albania*, p. 491.

Gjakova wanted to proceed to Salonika in order to occupy it, release the deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid II from his house arrest, and march to Constantinople to change the government and the Sultan.<sup>639</sup> This was unacceptable for Hasan Prishtina and the majority of the leaders who believed the occupation of Salonika and the replacement of the Sultan were not national concerns. Hasan Prishtina, who became the main figure of the movement, and the remaining followers of the Taksim Group, reached a compromise: to accept the offer of the Porte for partial autonomy and meanwhile to work towards independence, which would be declared at a later date. The plan was to be better organised within three or four months, during which period some of the conservatives who were 'creating obstacles would be eliminated.'<sup>640</sup> By 'eliminated,' it is likely that Prishtina intended to isolate or remove the loyalists from influential positions. Meanwhile, the Albanian leaders were convinced that they would continue to build upon the partial autonomy offered by the Porte.

Meanwhile, in September 1912, Grey seemed ready to change his mind about Albanian autonomy but with one condition. He agreed that whatever autonomy the Ottoman government would grant to the Albanians, the same had to be applied to the Christian population in Macedonia.<sup>641</sup> Other powers maintained the same position. Thus, the Ottoman Grand Vizier informed the Austro-Hungarian ambassador that the 'reforms granted to the Albanians would be extended to the Christian races' and his government would be encouraged to 'pursue this policy.'<sup>642</sup>

### The First Balkan War and Independence

Any form of autonomy would mean a decentralisation of power which was contrary to the political philosophy of the Young Turks, who aimed for a strong and centralised state.<sup>643</sup> Yet autonomy would satisfy, at least temporarily, most of the Albanian leadership who saw it as a compromise that would eventually lead to independence. As a matter of fact, this is what

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<sup>639</sup> Prishtina, pp. 32–33.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>641</sup> Grey to Buchanan, 2 September 1912, NA, FO, 37163/33672/12/44, Nr. 307.

<sup>642</sup> Grey to Cartwright 10 September 1912, NA, FO, 38109/3-1661/12/44, No. 59.

<sup>643</sup> Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969), pp. 98-99.

happened although in a manner contrary to the plans that were made in Taksim and Skopje. The plan had been to build autonomy in cooperation with the Porte and probably with the help of the Powers, while independence would come in the process. However, the situation in the Balkans developed unfavourably for the Albanians and the Porte, as there was no opportunity to start the process of autonomy because the neighbouring countries had different plans.<sup>644</sup> Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro intervened in the Porte and complained to the Powers about Albanian autonomy, arguing that their interests were endangered. Russia and France warned the Porte that there would be serious consequences if the borders of Albania were re-drawn, with both countries emphasising that they would not allow any Slavs to remain within any form or shape of Albania. Barclay, the British ambassador in Sofia, summed up the situation:

It is hardly necessary to point out the anxiety caused in Bulgaria as well, doubtless, as in Servia [Serbia] and Greece, by the success of the Albanian revolt, these three States would view the autonomy of Albania as a total blow to their aspirations. They wish to see Albania remain a thorn in the side of Turkey – a source of Weakness – and not become a semi-independent Mohammedan State, a strong pillar of the Empire.<sup>645</sup>

Barclay also noted that because of the situation in Macedonia, Albanian autonomy had caused ‘considerable anxiety’ in the Bulgarian government. Albanians in Sofia were seen as acquiring ‘an entirely new sphere of influence’. Hence, the Bulgarian government maintained that such a development could produce ‘grave consequences for the Macedonian peoples’ who would not allow ‘their national claims to be overridden by the Albanians in this way’.<sup>646</sup>

Even Austria-Hungary maintained that autonomy, as perceived by the Albanians, was not acceptable. Instead, Vienna urged the Porte to implement a plan for the decentralisation of the Ottoman administration in a way which would address the needs of the ethnic distribution of the population. With these actions, Vienna was attempting to keep both the Albanians and the Porte happy and also prevent the intervention of the Balkan countries.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Anamali and Prifti, pp. 501-503.

<sup>645</sup> Barclay to Grey, 14 August 1912, NA, FO, 34876/33672, Nr. 79.

<sup>646</sup> Barclay to Grey, 26 August 1912, NA, FO, 36789/34661, Nr. 82.

<sup>647</sup> Ramiz Abdyli, *Lëvizja Kombëtare Shqiptare 1911-1912, Libri 2* (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2004), pp. 380–382.

By late August 1912, an atmosphere of war was felt everywhere in the Balkans, with Albanian autonomy acting as a key reason for this atmosphere. Now Albania was to be defined territorially in an agreement with the Ottomans, according to which it was to include the four *vilayets* previously desired by the Albanian leaders. The governments of the neighbouring countries resolved to resist the creation of Albania along these lines, arguing that it was too large in size and 'would encroach heavily on their expectations'.<sup>648</sup> The neighbouring states believed that, if the Albanians were to achieve their national aspirations, it would help to stabilise the balance of power in the Balkans, a situation which was not desired under their national aspirations.<sup>649</sup> Historian Mark Mazower explains that:

The Albanian rebellion presaged radical changes in the balance of power in the Balkans. It showed that armed revolt against the Turkish authorities could succeed, spurring the Balkan states to assert their own claims to Ottoman territory. It marked the emergence of organised and militant Albanian nationalism, to the intense alarm of Serbia and Greece, both of which claimed territories with substantial Albanian-speaking populations. And it encouraged both Austria and Italy to dream of new footholds in southeastern Europe, which alarmed the Balkan states still more.<sup>650</sup>

Another reason for the atmosphere of war was the invasion of Libya by Italian forces. This meant that the Ottoman army was busy elsewhere and thus considerably weakened in its capacity to control the Balkan situation. Nazim Pasha, the war minister, contributed further to weakening the Ottoman side by purging the army of what he thought to be unreliable elements. He dismissed the troops in Macedonia which had completed their last year in active service and when the new mobilisation took place in autumn 1912, it went at a slow pace and under low discipline. Around 50,000 untrained soldiers were called up to serve in Macedonia meaning that the Ottoman army was not ready to face new hostilities in the area. This fact would not have been difficult to note by those Balkan countries preparing for armed conflict.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Edith Pierpont Stickney, *Southern Albania or Northern Epirus in European International Affairs 1912-1923* (Stanford University Press, 1926), p. 19.

<sup>649</sup> Nicola Guy, *The Birth of Albania: Ethnic Nationalism, the Great Powers of World War I and the Emergence of the Albanian Independence* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), p. 37.

<sup>650</sup> Mazower, *The Balkans*, p. 109.

<sup>651</sup> Helmreich, p. 99.

Montenegro tried to force the Porte to declare war by provoking the Ottoman army near Kolashin and Andrijevica, on the border with Kosovo. The Montenegrin army was positioned along the border with heavy artillery while the Serbian and Montenegrin governments distributed arms and ammunition to the Montenegrins and Serbs of the border region.<sup>652</sup> At the beginning of September, the British press reported that the Montenegrin army was approaching the region of Berane, the western part of the border of the *vilayet* of Kosovo. There was fear that Serbia was also moving towards the northern border of the *vilayet* of Kosovo. By the end of August, students in Serbia organised a massive demonstration calling upon the government to take measures regarding 'Old Serbia' [Kosovo].<sup>653</sup>

Albanian leaders also asked the Porte to provide 50,000 rifles for their people with the pretext of defending their borders, but the Porte provided no arms. However, arms were entering Kosovo from Serbia, some of which were given to Albanians in the area of Gjlani (east Kosovo) even though most were intended for the local Serbs. The Serbian consul in Skopje denied the involvement of his government and maintained that Belgrade had no power to stop this traffic of arms. Regardless of the Serbian consul's official stance, everyone knew the purpose of such supply. As confirmed by a British diplomat, Serbia was 'perusing the favourite Balkan policy of encouraging outrages in order to secure European intervention or provide a *casus belli*'.<sup>654</sup>

The Serbian consulate in Skopje also distributed a memorandum to all the diplomatic missions in the city. The content of the memorandum detailed mistreatment of the Serbs by the Ottoman regime and particularly by the Albanians in Kosovo. Although some cases of such mistreatment were true, as the British vice-consul explained 'it was possible that the Serbs might invent outrages to act as a counterbalance to the Bulgarian atrocities at Kochana'.<sup>655</sup> It is likely that what worried the Serbian government most was the easy occupation of Skopje by the Albanians and their prospects for gaining autonomy.

All hope for the autonomy of Albania was shattered on 8 October 1912 when Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The aim of the Montenegrin army was to occupy

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<sup>652</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, pp. 195–196.

<sup>653</sup> 'The Albanian Settlement: War Fever in Belgrade', *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 September 1912, p. 7.

<sup>654</sup> Peckham to Lamb, 24 September 1912, NA, FO, 195/2407, Nr. 76.

<sup>655</sup> Peckham to Lamb, 17 September 1912, NA, FO, 195/2407, Nr. 74.



Shkodra, the biggest and most prosperous Albanian city at that time. Montenegro had started the war and Serbia, which was making final preparations close to the borders of Kosovo, would soon join in. In March 1912, Vojislav Tankosić, a Serbian army officer and a member of the 'Black Hand,' was transferred to the headquarters of the border troops near Kosovo with the task of training Serbian volunteers. On the eve of the First Balkan War, a young man called Gavrilo Princip (1894-1918) arrived at the recruiting centre as a volunteer but was refused on medical grounds being 'too weak and small'.<sup>656</sup> He was sensitive and felt humiliated that he had not been given a chance to fight for the Serbian national cause within 'comitadjis' ranks, the irregular Serbian military force which was commanded by 'Black Hand' officers'.<sup>657</sup> However, this humiliation did not prevent him from continuing with other nationalist activities and further radicalisation. Princip's war was yet to come.<sup>658</sup>

The Serbian army attacked northern Kosovo on 14 October at Merdare. The disorganised Ottoman army withdrew and left the battlefield but Albanian resistance continued. On 18 October 1912, four days after the Serbian army entered Kosovo, King Petar of Serbia, in accordance with Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin, issued a declaration 'To the Serbian People', proclaiming:

The Turkish governments showed no interest in their duties towards their citizens and turned a deaf ear to all complaints and suggestions. Things got so far out of hand that no one was satisfied with the situation in Turkey in Europe. It became unbearable for the Serbs, the Greeks and for the Albanians, too. By the grace of God, I have therefore ordered my brave army to join in the Holy War to free our brethren and to ensure a better future.<sup>659</sup>

This was in effect a declaration of war. Albanians continued to offer resistance in several other areas but they were no match for the well-armed and powerful Serbian army. On 24 October the territory of what is today Kosovo was occupied by the Serbian army.<sup>660</sup> The Serbian First Army continued towards Macedonia, while the Third Army moved across

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<sup>656</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 52; Alexander J. Motyl, *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism – Leaders, Movements and Concepts*, Vol. 2 (London: Academic Press, 2001), p. 422.

<sup>657</sup> Rodney P. Carlisle, *Eyewitness History, World War I* (New York: Facts on File, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>658</sup> Vladimir Dedijer, 'Sarajevo Fifty Years After', *Foreign Affairs*, 42. 4 (1964), pp. 569-584 (p. 579).

<sup>659</sup> Leo Freundlich, 'Albania's Golgotha: Indictment of the Exterminators of the Albanian People' <[http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts20\\_1/AH1913\\_1.html](http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts20_1/AH1913_1.html)> [accessed 10 May 2016]; Robert Elsie, *Gathering Clouds* (London: Centre for Albanian Studies, 2015), pp. 37-72.

<sup>660</sup> Anamali and Prifti, pp. 505-506.

Kosovo towards north Albania in order to reach the Albanian coast. Before the Serbian army proceeded towards Macedonia, Albanians joined the Ottoman forces in order to protect the part of Macedonia they regarded as their own territory and grouped around Kumanovo and elsewhere. Albanian leaders such as Hasan Prishtina, Nexhip Draga and Bajram Curri issued a declaration to explain to the Powers that the Albanians had joined the Ottoman army to protect the land which was inhabited by Albanians and not the Ottoman Empire.<sup>661</sup> The decision to join forces with the Ottoman army was taken on 14 October in Skopje by Albanian leaders who were organised within a patriotic society called *Shoqëria e Zezë për Shpëtim* (Black Society for Salvation).<sup>662</sup> Before the meeting in Skopje took place, the newspaper *Liri e Shqipërisë* (Freedom of Albania), published in Bulgaria, called upon all Albanians to take up arms to defend the borders of Albania and raise the Albanian flag as a symbol of claiming national rights. These developments led Austro-Hungarian diplomats to report to Vienna that the Albanians had decided to serve on the fronts of the Balkan War. Their reports painted a picture of Albanian engagement in the theatre of the Balkan War: Albanians of the *vilayet* of Janina were fighting against Greece, those of Kosovo against Serbia, those of Shkodra against Montenegro and the Albanians of Manastir against Bulgaria.<sup>663</sup>

Between spring 1908 and August 1912, the Ottoman army and Albanian insurgents had exhausted each other in almost continuous clashes. Yet now Albanians and Ottomans were allies once again. However, the battle of Kumanovo ended after two days (23–24 October 1912) and the Ottoman army was heavily defeated.<sup>664</sup> With the victory at Kumanovo, the Serbs took control of northern Macedonia and were in a position to move south, towards Manastir, and west towards inland Albania and the Adriatic Sea. The Ottomans also suffered defeat elsewhere in Macedonia by the Bulgarian and Greek armies. On many occasions the Ottomans used Albanian detachments to protect their retreating army. This angered the Albanians and made them desert the front.<sup>665</sup> The Ottoman army, on whose protection the Albanians counted and relied, was practically destroyed. Some Ottoman and Albanian units continued to resist the Balkan armies moving towards Albania, but to no

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<sup>661</sup> Clayer, p. 634.

<sup>662</sup> Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 452.

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>664</sup> Hall, p. 48.

<sup>665</sup> Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, p. 453.

avail. The moment the Albanian leaders feared most had come. There was no force to protect their country or their people.

However, Albanian leaders still hoped to save the prospect of autonomy. As agreed in Taksim, Ismail Bey Qemali continued to visit European foreign ministries. When the Balkan War started, he went to meet Austro-Hungarian officials and ask for their support. Vienna's policy had regarded the Porte as the main factor in the Balkans but the swift victory of the Balkan armies had ruined this policy, leaving Vienna forced to make changes and abandon its old attitude. The new Serbian territorial gains in Macedonia were acceptable, to a degree, by Vienna, but the Habsburgs insisted that Belgrade was not to move towards any Albanian port in the Adriatic.<sup>666</sup>

This was a vague policy by Vienna, but within it, there was hope for the future of an Albanian state. After all, Vienna and Italy, as seen earlier, had already agreed to an independent Albania to be recognised only when the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Now that the collapse had finally arrived Ismail Bey Qemali was about to remind Vienna of this fact. Before visiting Vienna, Ismail Bey Qemali stopped at Bucharest, where a large and influential Albanian colony existed. He held a meeting with prominent members of the community and revealed his plan to declare Albanian independence. Some decided to accompany Ismail Bey Qemali on his tour of Europe and to return to Albania. He also telegraphed to all important cities in Albania and asked for delegates to be sent to the convention where independence would be declared.<sup>667</sup>

On 10 November 1912 Ismail Bey Qemali met Count Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister. In his memoirs Ismail Bey wrote:

His Excellency [Count Berchtold] approved my views on the national question, and readily granted the sole request which I made him, namely, to place at my disposal a vessel which would enable me to reach the first Albanian port before the arrival of the Serbian Army.<sup>668</sup>

That was all he wrote about the meeting and, as seen above, he did not explain his views on the 'national question' nor the answer of Count Berchtold. As it became known later,

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<sup>666</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, pp. 281-282.

<sup>667</sup> Falaschi, p. 370.

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.*

Count Berchtold told Ismail Bey Qemali that Vienna supported autonomy and not the independence of Albania. It is also not known what answer Ismail Bey Qemali offered in return but his actions, which were taken a few days later, showed that he considered independence to be the only answer. Qemali also visited Trieste, Italy, and proceeded to his birthplace, the Adriatic town of Vlora.<sup>669</sup> The Austro-Hungarian vessel could not approach Vlora as the port was blockaded by Greek warships, so instead, on 21 November, he disembarked in Durrës only to find the town and the area in chaos. The population, deceived by the Ottoman authorities, believed that the Ottoman army had been victorious in the war. 'They did not even know that the Serbs were at their very gates', wrote Qemali.<sup>670</sup>

The Ottoman authorities still showed hostility to the idea of Albanian independence being declared in Durrës. Therefore, Ismail Bey and his group of notable supporters, which grew again in Durrës, took the land road to Vlora which was being held by armed Albanians. Before the Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek armies invaded the Albanian territory without encountering any serious resistance, some of the Albanian cities proclaimed independence and elected their delegates to attend a national convention which was announced by Ismail Bey from Bucharest.<sup>671</sup>

Between 22–25 November, Qemali announced a National Convention to be held in Vlora and invited many Albanian political activists to take part. On 28 November 1912, 83 delegates, representing most of the towns of Kosovo, Macedonia and what was later to become Albania, opened the first Albanian National Assembly. Most of the delegates were intellectuals, politicians or diplomats who until then had served the Ottoman Empire.<sup>672</sup> The time to end their service to the Empire had finally come. They symbolically lowered the Ottoman flag and raised the Albanian flag. After signing the Declaration of Independence the formalities were over. They formed a provisional government to be headed by Ismail Bey Qemali while the ministers (two Catholics, three Orthodox and five Muslims) were

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<sup>669</sup> Anamali and Prifti, p. 509.

<sup>670</sup> Kemal, p. 371.

<sup>671</sup> Frashëri, *The History of Albania*, p. 178.

<sup>672</sup> Dokumente të pavarësisë, AQSH, F. 2, 1912, D. 74/1; 73/3; AQSH, F. 12, 1912, D. 12; AQSH. F. 56, V. 1912, D. 26, 61, 65 and 96.

chosen according to the principle of national distribution and covering the four *vilayets* they believed belonged to Albania.<sup>673</sup>

The very first duty of the government was to send telegrams to the European Powers and neighbouring Balkan countries in order to inform them that Albania, from now on, was independent and had taken a neutral stance in the Balkan War. The first day of work of the first Albanian government had ended, and this was in fact all they could do for some time in the future. The government had no organized army and the territory they controlled did not extend far beyond the surroundings of the town of Vlorë, which itself was besieged and blockaded by the invading Greek army.<sup>674</sup> This was a very different Albania from what Albanian leaders had envisaged in Taksim and Skopje. The provisional government appealed for international recognition or for any form of help. For instance, a telegram was sent to the 'Government of His Britannic Majesty to recognise the change of the political life of the Albanian nation.'<sup>675</sup> London did not respond.

The British government avoided any contact with the Albanian provisional government as it still regarded the area as an Ottoman dominion. However, the relationship between the British government and the Porte had by now gone through significant changes. At the end of 1912, British diplomats in Constantinople confirmed that the attitude of the British Government towards the Porte throughout that year was 'one of reserve' and caused a 'feeling of profound disappointment' among Ottoman politicians. The Ottoman officials, in moments of crisis, had traditionally looked to the British government for help but it would no longer offer assistance to the Porte. British diplomats believed that Ottoman officials had 'completely closed their eyes' to the fact that London had modified its relations with Russia. A decade later Talaat Pasha, a prominent Young Turk and by then a Grand Vizier, spoke about this matter. He told Aubrey Herbert that the Young Turks had made a big mistake in not decentralising the Empire and in not granting autonomy to the Albanians when they came to power.<sup>676</sup> Talaat Pasha also blamed the policies made in London and

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<sup>673</sup> Owen Pearson, *Albania and King Zog – Independence, Republic and Monarchy 1908–1939* (London: The Centre for Albanian Studies & I. B. Tauris, 2004) pp. 33–34.

<sup>674</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 64.

<sup>675</sup> Kemal, pp. 372–3.

<sup>676</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. 307.

the British embassy in Constantinople for worsening Ottoman–British relations. He told Herbert:

There was nothing in those days which we would not have given if you had asked it from us. But you wanted nothing of us, and gratitude cannot live on air. The Ambassador [Lowther] was cold; Fitzmaurice was hostile; we had to find means to live. But even after our estrangement, we still tried to regain your friendship. We accepted Kiamil Pasha, our determined opponent, as Grand Vizier, to please you. You drove us into the arms of Germany. We had no alternative: anything else was political death and partition.<sup>677</sup>

Talaat Pasha also hinted that autonomy would have been granted to the Albanians if the British had pressurised the Porte. This information came in 1921. However, in 1912 London had made it known that the Porte could not rely on British assistance or on their sympathy any longer. By this time the Ottoman Empire in Europe had turned into a sinking ship and the ‘English lifeboat’ was nowhere near to be seen. This was made clear on 9 November 1912 when the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith spoke at The Guildhall. Speaking about the Balkan War and having in mind the progress of the Balkan armies into Ottoman territories, he confirmed that ‘the victors were not to be robbed of the fruits which cost them so dear’.<sup>678</sup> This was not good news for Albania, either. Asquith declared that the British government was to recognise the occupation of Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania by the armies of the Balkan League. A few days later, Winston Churchill, then the First Lord of the Admiralty, confirmed the success of the Balkan League which, to him, was in line with Gladstonian Liberal ideas and thus a satisfactory outcome. On 30 November 1912 in his speech at the Eighty Club, Churchill praised Gladstone ‘that great man who predicted the course of events in extraordinary precision and detail.’<sup>679</sup> An international conference was soon to be held in London to deal with the Albanian question demonstrating that, by now, the Albanian question was entirely internationalised, albeit in a manner contrary to that which the Albanian leaders had worked and hoped for.

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<sup>677</sup> Ibid, p. 313.

<sup>678</sup> C. J. Lowe and M. L. Dockrill, *Mirage of Power - the British Foreign Policy 1902-1914, Part 1* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 107-108.

<sup>679</sup> Heller, p. 74.

## Conclusion

The British government expressed concern about the Albanian insurrection of 1911, yet because of the broader absence of major interests in the Balkans would not take independent action or assume the role of the protector of Albania. Instead, Grey favoured collective action so that the British government would not jeopardise its relations with the Porte. The Albanian insurrections from 1909 to 1912 also revealed that the British government had left the Balkans in the hands of the three most interested Powers: Austria-Hungary, Russia and Italy.

However, throughout 1911 the British government started to abandon their supportive policy towards the Porte as the 'Germanisation of Turkey' gathered pace. From this point onwards, the British government became aware that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was nearing, but took no action to prevent it. The British government distanced itself from the Porte but still did not change its neutral position on the Balkans. This position was reconfirmed as late as April 1912 by Peckham, the British consul in Skopje, who told the Albanian representative that Britain had no special interest in Balkan issues.<sup>680</sup>

The Albanian uprising of summer 1912 forced the Young Turk regime to consider the autonomy of Albania. By now the Ottoman army was exhausted and overstretched by constant battles with the Albanians, with campaigns against rebellions in Yemen and war in Libya. All these factors, and in particular the campaign for Albanian autonomy, pushed Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro to move against the weakened Porte and start the First Balkan War, marking the end of Ottoman presence in Europe.

Although the Albanian insurrection of 1911 became a cause of the changes in British policy towards the Porte, this change was not in favour of the Albanian national movement. By the beginning of November 1912, when the Ottoman army had collapsed in Macedonia, Albanian leaders had no choice other than to proclaim the independence of Albania on 28 November 1912.

The beginning of the First Balkan War showed that the British were not interested in the Ottoman Empire. This also meant that the British were no longer neutral, as they made no

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<sup>680</sup> Peckham to Lamb, 28 April 1912, NA, FO, 195/2406, Nr. 31.

attempts to deny the advance of the Balkan armies or build any obstacles to their future military operations in the remaining European parts of the Ottoman Empire. Before any international peace conference took place, Prime Minister Asquith had confirmed the British position which favoured the Allied Balkan countries that had occupied Macedonia and Albania.<sup>681</sup>

In doing so, the British government applied the Gladstonian or Liberal approach to events in the Balkans. In line with this approach, Edward Grey maintained that the Christian Balkan states had no alternative other than to combine their strength and turn against the Sultan. In London, the Balkan League's military engagement against the Porte was considered as a reasonable act. Grey declared that the cause of the war was just and as such it was seen as the 'emancipation of the Christian subjects of Turkey in South-East Europe.'<sup>682</sup>

Since 1878 the Albanian leaders had been active in finding a solution to their national question but the Porte and the Powers had repeatedly ignored their efforts. The Balkan War finally brought the Albanian Question to the consideration of the Powers. By the end of 1912 Albania had become a dangerous spot with the potential of spreading conflict throughout the Balkan and perhaps the whole continent. Hence, it could no longer be ignored.

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<sup>681</sup> Gillard, *Vol. 20*, p. 371.

<sup>682</sup> Edward Grey, *Twenty Five Years 1892-1916, Vol. 1* (New York: Frederik A. Stokes Co., 1925), pp. 259-60.



## Chapter VII

### Edith Durham: The Balkans for the Balkan People

*The Constitution was proclaimed, Scutari [Shkodra] was wild with joy. Thousands of mountain men in finest array marched into the town, were feted and feasted. We fired revolvers (I had one in each hand) into the air till not a cartridge was left. Not an accident nor disorder occurred.* – Edith Durham.<sup>683</sup>

### Introduction

Edith Durham arrived in the Balkans for the first time in 1900. By 1908 Durham had ‘gone native’ and in an ‘Albanian manner’ she celebrated the promulgation of the Ottoman Constitution reinstated following the Young Turk Revolution. Until 1912 Durham held a Liberal Gladstonian view of Balkan matters and was a supporter of all Balkan national movements against Ottoman rule. Yet with the start of the Balkan Wars, Durham took sides and became a fierce supporter and lobbyist for the Albanian national movement.

This chapter aims to show Durham’s role and contribution to the Albanian national movement from the Balkan Wars of 1912 to the start of the First World War in 1914. In order to build a clear picture of her political profile and her contribution to affairs in the Balkans and Albania, it will be necessary to examine some of her activities that took place from 1900 onwards. Durham's work and her political activities will be discussed through her commitment to the national principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people', the motto of those Liberal Gladstonians who were members of the Balkan Committee. Durham, who was a member and activist of this Committee, believed that the phrase ‘the Balkans for the Balkan people’ perfectly encapsulated the principle of nationality, and as such, the two notions will be treated as complimentary in this chapter. Edith Durham arrived first in Montenegro, where she spent most of her time in the region, but her engagement in the

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<sup>683</sup> Edith Durham, Albania - Special Afternoon Lecture at Royal Institution of Great Britain, 4 February 1941, MS 405/203.

Balkans came as a significant help to the Albanian national movement. Durham had no significant knowledge, perceptions or prejudices about the Balkans and, like many other Gladstonians, knew only that the suffering Christians of this part of Europe should be freed from Ottoman rule.

Durham's efforts to win the support of the British government and the public take central stage in this chapter. Durham's work was unique in that, unlike any other Balkan Committee members or Liberals who worked to influence the British government from London, Durham undertook her work primarily from the Balkans. Most of her letters to the Foreign Office, as well as her articles that were published in the British press, were sent from the Balkans. The same can be said of her books,<sup>684</sup> which were all based on her personal experience or knowledge that she gained while travelling or working in the region for British organisations such as the Macedonian Relief Fund, Albanian Relief Fund, British Foreign Bible Society or the Royal Anthropological Institute. Durham also sought to influence the British diplomats and consuls who were stationed in the Balkans. As this chapter illustrates, Durham's efforts in trying to win the support of the British consuls in the Balkans and the Foreign Office in London, ended with some success. Although not entirely satisfied, she had contributed to introducing the Albanian Question, together with the question of other Balkan nations, to the British establishment. The beginning of the First World War changed this situation, leading the British government to adopt unfavourable policies for Durham and Albania.

Durham's work and her affectionate connection to the Balkans has remained as a monumental legacy which cannot be ignored. Although Durham is tremendously popular in the Balkans, especially among Albanians, in Britain she remains almost unknown to the public. Durham's efforts to influence and win the support of the British public and government for the Albanians have so far not been examined by an academic work. Durham's efforts in influencing British policy and in trying to apply the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' are to be found in many of her letters, as well as published and unpublished writings, which are stored in the archives of the Royal Institute of

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<sup>684</sup> Edith Durham is author of the following books: *Through the land of the Serbs* (1904); *The Burden of the Balkans* (1905); *High Albania* (1909); *The Struggle for Scutari* (1914); *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle* (1920); *The Sarajevo Crime* (1925); *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (1928).

Anthropology, the University of Leeds Library (Special Collections), the Surrey History Centre Archives and the Somerset Heritage Centre Archives. Hence, by addressing Durham's influence on the Albanian national cause, this chapter makes a significant contribution to the literature in the field and forms an important part of this thesis.

#### A Gladstonian view on the Balkans and placing Albanians among the Balkan people

Edith Durham was born in London to Arthur and Mary Durham and was the eldest of nine children. Her father was a senior consulting surgeon at Guy's Hospital in London. Her mother was the daughter of the well-known economist William Ellis, a close friend and colleague of John Stuart Mill. Ellis was also known as a pioneer of technical schools in England and as a friend of Giuseppe Garibaldi, whom he helped in early clandestine work towards the unification of Italy. Edith Durham's brother conducted research into malaria and her sister Frances was the first woman to become assistant secretary in the civil service. Edith Durham attended Bedford College (1878–82) and later studied art at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Until 1900 Durham exhibited her drawings and illustrated publications, including a volume of the *Cambridge Natural History* published in 1899.<sup>685</sup>

Aged 37, Durham went to Montenegro for medical reasons, as advised by her doctor, to spend some time in a warm-climate country. She arrived in Cetinje, then the capital of Montenegro, where she discovered a taste for Balkan life that would have great impact on her future.<sup>686</sup> At first, Durham did not like Montenegro, a small country of around 100,000 inhabitants. Cetinje seemed to her like a village yet strangely, the tiny capital housed consular representatives of the Powers, leading Durham to wonder why they had found an interest in this small country. Since at that time she was not interested in international politics, Durham wrote to her mother to describe the strangeness of Montenegro 'as Gilbert and Sullivan opera'.<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> Harry Hodgkinson, 'Durham, (Mary) Edith (1863–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/37379>> [accessed 18 August 2016]; See also Harry Hodgkinson's Introduction in *M. Edith Durham*, ed., by Destani, pp. i-xx.

<sup>686</sup> John B. Allcock and Antonia Young, eds., *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons – Women Travelling in the Balkans* (New York: Bergham Books, 2000), pp. 9-10.

<sup>687</sup> Durham to her mother, 10 September 1900, RAI, MS 43.

Durham also described this unusual situation in an unpublished story titled *International Episode*. Together, foreign diplomats dined in a two-story hotel in Maligrad (Smallville), as she named Cetinje in this story. The hotel symbolically represents Montenegro, while the waiter represents the government or the ruler of the country. The most important diplomat is the Austro-Hungarian representative, a character so important that the waiter must always apologise to him, even for the delay of food which he did not order. Montenegro, a country which cannot protect itself, should serve, with a smiling face, the Ministers Plenipotentiary whose business it is to plan its 'absorption'.<sup>688</sup> At the dining table, England, as a 'non-annexing Power,' is an ordinary guest. France, Italy and England engage in daily conversation about 'a question of international interest, namely which of the local laundresses got up shirt fronts the best', leaving Austria-Hungary to extend his 'sphere of influence in his own way'. England is happy with the Austro-Hungarian representative who offers him 'a good deal of information as to the advisability of firmness in dealing with semi-civilised people'.<sup>689</sup> Furthermore, the representatives of Austria-Hungary, Italy and France observe developments in Albania. Russia, in turn, keeps an eye on Austria-Hungary, Italy and France. This was the local and international situation in Montenegro as Durham viewed it in 1900.

In 1902 Durham visited Serbia and wrote *Through the Land of the Serbs* in which she gave an account of the situation in the country, emphasising that it was full of military personnel. Everyone spoke about expansion towards the south, an area which was still part of the Ottoman Empire. She sent the manuscript to many publishers but none of them were interested in publishing it since the Balkans, and particularly Serbia, was not considered an interesting topic at that time. Above all, Durham was a woman and had no prior published books. Unexpectedly, a historic event helped her situation. In 1903 King Alexandar and Queen Draga Obrenović of Serbia were assassinated and replaced by Petar Karađorđević. The assassination was executed with a merciless barbarity which had culminated after a long rivalry between the Karađorđević and Obrenović families for the Serbian throne.<sup>690</sup> A few years later, Durham would write about this subject on many

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<sup>688</sup> Edith Durham, *International Episode*, RAI, MS 45:16.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>690</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 3; Robert Nash, *The Great Pictorial History of World Crime, Vol. 2* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), p. 314.

occasions.<sup>691</sup> The British and European public were shocked by the regicide in Belgrade and the British government, in protest of such barbarity, withdrew its diplomatic mission from Belgrade. Suddenly, interest in Serbia grew in Britain and Durham found a publisher for her first book.<sup>692</sup>

In *Through the Land of the Serbs*, Durham exposed her belief in the doctrine of the Gladstonian Liberals which was optimistic about the future of the Balkans but showed little regard for its Muslim population. Based on this doctrine, Durham believed that the Balkan people should be left to work out their separate destinies but soon discovered that this doctrine was 'unworkable and inappropriate'. Based on experiences she had gained in Serbia and later in Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Montenegro, she became convinced that the borders, which had been imposed by the Treaty of Berlin, were artificial and created ethnic tensions. In another unpublished manuscript, Durham described how the Powers met in Berlin to settle the Near Eastern question and make peace, yet practically each Power was there only 'to out-wit the other'.<sup>693</sup> The land was there to be divided for the benefit of the dividers and with no respect for ethnic lines. Her story was about *Gornji Bunar and Donji Bunar* (Upper and Lower Well) in which the village was given to Montenegro but the well was given to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. 'Three men had died and undying hatred had been born', she wrote, adding that 'the truth had died and many more people would die, because of the united wisdom and the split differences of the Berlin Congress'.<sup>694</sup> The story emphasised Durham's disagreement with the lack of consideration shown for the principle of ethnicity when drawing borders in the Treaty of Berlin. The story did not create much impact as it remained unpublished, most likely due to the lack of interest the British press showed in this matter.

However, the published book *Through the Land of the Serbs* did make an impact. Durham warned that the Balkan system, imposed by the Powers at the Congress of Berlin, was about to collapse together with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>695</sup> The book strengthened the perceptions of those who believed the Treaty of Berlin had failed to satisfy the Balkan

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<sup>691</sup> Edith Durham, *Jugoslavia* (manuscript), RAI, MS 51:1-2.

<sup>692</sup> Gary Shanfelt, 'An English Lady in High Albania: Edith Durham and the Balkans', *East European Quarterly*, 25. 3 (1999), pp. 283-300 (p. 290).

<sup>693</sup> Edith Durham, *Because of the Berlin Congress – as told by an Austria-Hungarian officer*, RAI, MS 54:29.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>695</sup> Tanner, p. 54.

states' demands and further encouraged British Liberals to continue lobbying against it. These Liberals were grouped in the *Balkan Committee* and, as we have seen earlier, the members were mainly Gladstonians who agitated against the Ottoman regime and supported Christian minority rights in the Balkans. However, Durham, at this stage, appeared as a supporter of the Serbian national cause. This can be seen throughout her book, particularly in her support for Serbian claims over the town of Shkodra, a town which was almost entirely ethnically Albanian, as she admitted herself. She maintained that the Serbs were entitled to this north Albanian town on historical grounds but less than a decade later changed her mind and protested against the Serb and Montenegrin attack on Shkodra, now convinced that the town, as well as the entire *vilayet* of Shkodra, should belong to Albania.<sup>696</sup>

With her first book and the many other articles she published consequently about the Balkans, Durham joined the ranks of other Balkan experts and, in early 1904, was sent to Macedonia by the newly formed Macedonian Relief Committee to help with humanitarian work.<sup>697</sup> In Macedonia, Durham equipped herself with knowledge and experience about the region. Although she greatly disliked the regime of the Porte, she maintained that demonising the Ottomans unreasonably, as other Liberals did, was not something she would support. As a result of her family background she did not give much consideration to religion, an attitude very different to that of most Gladstonians. Divisions between her and other Liberals of the Balkan Committee widened but at that time she was not strong enough to enter in direct conflict with them. After all, at this stage, it was the Liberals who had enabled her to go and work in Macedonia. However, as time passed, she began to enter into fierce conflict with Committee members Henry Noel Brailsford and R. W. Seton-Watson, who were known supporters of the Bulgarian and Serbian cause respectively. Durham strongly supported her own opinions which were based on the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' and, because of this, she made many other enemies among Balkan specialists, academics and politicians in Britain.<sup>698</sup> Within the idea of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' Durham believed it possible to apply the principle of nationality which, as time passed brought her close to the Albanian national cause.

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<sup>696</sup> Durham, *Struggle for Scutari*, pp. 3-8.

<sup>697</sup> Shanfelt, p. 287.

<sup>698</sup> Allcock and Young, pp. 16-17.

Soon after her arrival in Macedonia in 1904, she was disappointed by the difficult situation she found there and was underwhelmed by the Christian people of Slav origin. In one of her first articles on Macedonia she characterised the peasants of this region as backward, 'slow-minded, ignorant, and inferior to any other race of the Balkans', adding that they had no hope for the future. Poverty was not the only reason for such an unpleasant situation. Durham, as a Gladstonian, blamed Ottoman rule and neglect by Europe for the difficulties in Macedonia, urging that the region be put under a 'Christian ruler' with the supervision of the Powers.<sup>699</sup>

In the Macedonian conflict that had started in 1903, Durham observed the Christians (Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs and Macedonians) committing unspeakable massacres against each other in the name of Christianity. The uprising in Macedonia was seen in Europe as a process of liberation of the Christians from the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Yet in seeking to liberate themselves from the Ottomans, the Christians also fought and killed each other in order to create a national advantage. This situation disgusted Durham, who wrote in 1904 that 'such was the Christianity which at that time was being prayed for in English Churches'.<sup>700</sup>

Through her work Durham also sought to explain the source of tensions which led to the Balkan Wars. She pointed out that Western ideas, which were forced upon the Balkan states, were incompatible with the reality that she saw on the ground. She also dismissed the idea, which was widely maintained in Britain and other European countries, that religion was the main factor causing the conflicts in the Balkans. Rather she explained that it was in fact nationalism that was causing conflicts and which would, ultimately, end Ottoman rule in Europe.<sup>701</sup> In holding such a view, Durham had already started to distance herself from mainstream Gladstonian Liberalism.

The article 'From an Albanian's point of view', published by Durham in March 1903, could be considered as her first attempt to present the Albanian national aspirations to the British public.<sup>702</sup> Durham's intention in this article was to place the Albanians among the

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<sup>699</sup> Elsie and Destani, *The Blaze in the Balkans*, p. 23; Edith Durham, 'My Golden Sisters: A Macedonian Picture', *The Monthly Review*, 44. 15 (1904), pp. 73-81 (p. 75).

<sup>700</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 83.

<sup>701</sup> Durham, *Burden of the Balkans*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>702</sup> Destani, *M. Edith Durham*, p. 2.

Balkan people and show that they had the same national problem and the same request for recognition as others. Describing the 'Tame Albanian', Durham sought to explain that the Albanians had some understanding and knowledge of and indeed respect for Great Britain. To the Albanian, this knowledge and respect was not mutual because the British did not show much consideration for the Albanians in return. 'Englishmans, silly mans! No understand my people' said the 'Tame Albanian' to Durham.<sup>703</sup>

Becoming more familiar with the Albanian national cause, Durham discovered that the principle 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' was not as inclusive as most British Liberals believed. In reality, this principle excluded the Albanians from the future of the Balkans which was envisaged once free from Ottoman rule. Durham criticised the Powers, particularly Britain, for not supporting the Albanian national cause which, according to her, was central to the Balkan problem. However, supporting the Albanians did not mean that she abandoned her support or sympathy for other Balkan nations. 'I should like each of the Balkan peoples to be left to work out its own salvation in its own national way, with fair play and no favour',<sup>704</sup> she wrote in her 1905 book *The Burden of the Balkans*. The publication received wide and fair reviews in the British press, but all reviews noted and concentrated upon the difficult situation of the Balkan Christians under Ottoman rule. Although it noted that Durham's aim was to present the Macedonian conflict as a product of nationalist movements, and not as a question of religion as most Balkan experts and the British public presumed,<sup>705</sup> the press failed to see the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' as the book had intended.

In 1904 Durham was employed by the British Foreign Bible Society which was based in Manastir, Macedonia. As we have seen earlier, Durham journeyed to Albania to sell Bibles and came to know the Albanian population, encountering Albanian intellectuals who were mostly nationalist in their outlook and who hoped to find a solution to their national cause within the principle of the 'Balkans for the Balkan people' and sought British support. Durham was fascinated with Albania, particularly with its northern part. Albanians too, were fascinated by the foreign woman who liked them, respected their heritage, helped

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<sup>703</sup> Edith Durham, 'From an Albanian's point of view', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 March 1903, RAI, MS 53.

<sup>704</sup> Durham, *The Burden of the Balkans*, p. 64.

<sup>705</sup> See: Sunday Morning Herald, 29 April 1905; The Irish Times, 23 June 1905 and Tablet 26 August 1905, RAI MS 53.



them and who was travelling, on most occasions, alone through Albania. It was not long before she was approached by some of the Albanian leaders and asked to advocate on behalf of their national movement to the British, European Powers and the press. In some ways she had already taken such a role before being asked to do so.<sup>706</sup>

After 1905 a picturesque Albania and idyllic Albanians were not only the subject of her drawings but she gradually started to show more intensive support for the Albanian national cause. However, from the Liberal perspective, she had chosen to support the 'wrong' people, the majority of Albanians being Muslim and viewed in the West as supporters of the Ottoman Empire. Durham's efforts to present the Albanians in the same manner as all other Balkan peoples caused trouble among Gladstonian Liberals in Britain. However, with strong determination, great experience and knowledge, Durham secured a respectable place among the members of the Balkan Committee, academics and the Foreign Office.

In 1905, after spending considerable time in Macedonia and Albania, Durham went back to Montenegro which had become a sort of 'residential' country for her. By now, among Montenegrins she had become a 'strange English woman' who dared to travel to Albania, lived in a hotel in Cetinje and dined regularly with foreign consuls assigned to this small capital. Apart of Montenegro, Durham had visited Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Albania. She had written books and published articles in the British press, which was a good reason why the foreign consuls and diplomats in Cetinje and Shkodra wanted to talk and dine with her. Her reputation also grew in London among diplomats in the Foreign Office and the press. In 1908 Durham was asked by the Royal Anthropological Institute to speak on the Balkans at Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge. After an impressive lecture, the Institute also asked her to visit north Albania and conduct anthropological research there. Durham accepted the proposal gladly. After she spent a considerable time among the mountaineers of northern Albania, the book *High Albania* came out in 1909.<sup>707</sup>

*High Albania* was reviewed by a dozen or so British newspapers and magazines, with probably the best review which explained Durham's work and intentions, being published

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<sup>706</sup> Tanner, p. 96.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

in *Pall Mall Gazette*. The position of Albania was explained as a result of Austrian intrigue and Italian ambition. It was also noted that the Albanian efforts 'to receive reconsideration at the hands of Great Britain' would be dangerous as it would 'be accompanied by interminable complications'.<sup>708</sup> The ambition of the Albanians for autonomy was regarded as 'an experiment which would be provocative and even more disastrous'. The book, apart from its political message, also contained studies on the customs and folklore of Albania. Therefore, the reviewer suggested that 'the unofficial character of this book will be clear to the Albanians themselves' and would 'appeal to a limited circle' of readers.<sup>709</sup> The angle taken by the review was close to the official position held by the British government on Albania at that time and, as such, did not achieve Durham's purpose of making the Albanian question popular among the government and public. This was a disappointment for Durham but did not discourage her from developing further her interest in and support for Albanians, nor from trying to win British support for their cause.

Nevertheless, the book confirmed Durham's authority on the Albanian question in Britain. By 1910 she had also become widely known and popular in Albania where she was recognised as their 'protector' in the West who worked tirelessly to publicise their cause and get support. Therefore, the mountaineers of the north 'proclaimed' her as 'Krajlica e Malevet' (Mountain Queen). This honorary title gave her the will and authority to represent them before the world.<sup>710</sup> Durham also became popular among the Albanian diaspora in Europe and the USA. In August 1911, Durham received a letter from a group of Albanians in the United States, saying that the Albanian colony there held her in high regard and informing her that she should be 'enshrined in history as the Albanian Joan of Arc'.<sup>711</sup> Durham wrote about this to the British consular representatives in Albania and Montenegro, probably because she wanted to show them that she enjoyed wide popularity and authority among the Albanians.

As a Liberal Gladstonian, Durham supported the Albanian rebellions against the Porte, including the insurrection of 1911. Before the insurrection started she wrote to the Foreign

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<sup>708</sup> 'Troublesome People', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 March 1910 – RAI, MS 53.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>710</sup> Tanner, pp. 150-151.

<sup>711</sup> Durham, Vol. 1, University of Leeds Library, Special Collections, Case M-10 DUR, pp. 62-63; Durham to Spence, 30 August 1911, NA, FO 371/1231, Nr. 1.

Office with the aim of gaining British support. She was aware that the British government still believed the Young Turk government to be democratic, and as such, able to deal with the Albanian question. She wrote that Albanians, Catholic and Muslim, were resolved to act together against the Young Turk regime because they saw in it no hope for the progress and development for Albania. Explaining the Ottoman state institutions which were run by the Young Turks she wrote:

He [the Ottoman] is a good soldier and nothing more. Parliament is merely a piece of European goods stuck in the front window to hide what is going on behind. The government is really a military tyranny. The Turkish pretence that the Albanians do not wish for law and order is false.<sup>712</sup>

As Austria-Hungary and Italy were not interested in helping those Albanians preparing the insurrection of 1911, she suggested that the British government should offer to help. To this end she wrote to the Foreign Office to show her readiness to help the Albanians and to express her thoughts about the future of Ottoman rule in the Balkans:

The whole thing now is in ferment. I am afraid I am no longer strong enough to go and help shoot Turks myself, but I certainly hope to live to see them cease to rule in Europe.<sup>713</sup>

The governments of Britain and the other Powers were not pleased with such a move by the Albanians. Their response worried Durham, who wished to see London and Vienna applying the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' together and supporting the Albanian national cause. Durham helped the Albanians in drafting the '12 Point Memorandum' and wrote that the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra tried to convince the Albanians not to rise against the Porte and made it known that there would be no help if they acted against his advice.<sup>714</sup>

The Albanians of the north, most of whom were Catholic, had lost the little faith they had in Austria-Hungary and the other European Powers. Most of the Albanians that Durham met seemed to have believed that the Powers were interested only in occupying foreign land

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<sup>712</sup> Durham to Foreign Office, 16 March 1911, NA, FO 371/1228, Nr. 1.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> Durham to Foreign Office, 28 December 1911, NA, FO, 195/2406.

and were pleased with the attacks of Italy on Libya in 1911. When Durham tried to convince them that this was not true, she was told: 'We know the Powers. They are like brigands. They quarrel by day - but by night they go out robbing together'.<sup>715</sup>

Such was the opinion of many Albanians on Austria-Hungary and the Powers just before the start of the Balkan Wars. After the insurrection of 1911 Durham was the only authority to whom Albanian leaders would turn for help and advice. Austria-Hungary was not happy with the 'leeway it had lost', a point Durham noted when she wrote that the mountaineers came to her for advice 'in preference to the Austrian consul'. She added that the Austro-Hungarian consul 'used to be king; but they [the Albanians] call me Queen.'<sup>716</sup> By now she was gaining wide popularity among the Albanians thanks to her personality and the fact that she was British.

As a result of Durham's work and activity, the popularity of Britain grew among the Albanians. She wrote to the Foreign Office, emphasising her importance and hoping to gain sympathy for Albania:

England is enormously popular. I keep getting grateful deputations and letters about districts and villages who are supposed to have been priority saved from destruction by 'Grande Bretagne' and the 'Krajlica' [Queen] which is myself.<sup>717</sup>

King Nikola of Montenegro knew that Durham was an important woman because she was writing for *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. Though Durham had no direct links with the British government, it was not farfetched to presume that some of her reports would end up on the desks of the Foreign Office. For this reason, the Montenegrin king showed hospitality to her and sought to use Durham's prestige among the Albanians; he had tried to use the influence she had over the Albanians but she had refused to get engaged in such a relationship. Once King Nikola asked her: 'Miss Durham, why are you wearing the jewellery of my worst enemies?' to which Durham replied: 'because, Your Majesty, they are my best friends'.<sup>718</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> Ibid.

<sup>716</sup> Durham to Spence, 30 August 1911, NA, FO, 371/1231, Enclosure in Nr. 1.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid.

<sup>718</sup> Destani, *M. Edith Durham*, p. vii.

In 1911 Durham's authority was known by all British consular and diplomatic representations serving in the Balkans and beyond. A British diplomat in Constantinople noted that 'the singular devotion of Miss Edith Durham has won general respect in all the Western Balkan States'.<sup>719</sup> Durham's importance could also be seen through her correspondence with Bowring Spence, who served as Consul General in Trieste, Italy. When Durham wrote to inform Spence about the situation in Albania, she also told him that she was writing the letter from a hospital bed in Shkodra where she was lying very ill. Spence immediately wrote to Lord Dufferin to ask if the Foreign Office could send 'some suitable and energetic person out to Miss Durham who is ill and in great need of a lady help'.<sup>720</sup> Durham's popularity grew particularly high among the diplomats representing their countries in Cetinje and Shkodra.

In March 1912, signs of general insurrection for autonomy appeared in Kosovo and Macedonia about which Durham, being in contact with Albanian leaders, had information. During that time Durham was in Shkodra and observed attempts by foreign diplomats to find out what exactly was happening. These diplomats knew that no one was better informed about Albania than Durham and so approached her for information. She wrote: 'they ask me, and I say I don't know'.<sup>721</sup> This may show that Durham was determined to provide the diplomats with only the information she regarded as useful for the Albanian cause. Despite this, there were two British diplomats with whom she established very close cooperation and to whom she did provide information.

Durham often wrote to the British Consul in Shkodra and to others who served in Macedonia to keep them informed about and influence their opinion on Albanian matters. One of the consuls she targeted was Harry Lamb (1857-1948) who served as General Consul in Salonika, the main consular centre in Macedonia. When Lamb was transferred to Durrës and Vlora in Albania in 1912, Durham intensified her letters to him. Lamb despatched many of these letters to the Foreign Office. In one report he told Grey that Durham's 'interest in and knowledge of Albanian affairs is well known'.<sup>722</sup> In the same

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<sup>719</sup> Pears, p. vi.

<sup>720</sup> Durham, Vol. I, M-10 DUR, Spence to Dufferin, 7 September 1911, NA, FO, 371/1231, Nr. 1.

<sup>721</sup> Ibid, Durham to Nevinson, 1 March 1912, NA, FO, 371/1481, Nr. 19.

<sup>722</sup> Robert Elsie and Bejtullah Destani, eds., *The Cham Albanians of Greece: A documentary History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), p. 23.

letter, Lamb wrote that ‘after consultation with myself’ Durham had gone to Vlora in order to form a reliable estimate about the situation and ‘work out a possibility of relieving it’.<sup>723</sup> Decades later in a letter Durham sent to her friend Edward Boyle,<sup>724</sup> who at that time was the chairman of the *Balkan Committee*, spoke about another cooperation between her and Lamb. ‘I was in a spying mission’ she wrote about one of the journeys she made during the summer of 1914 to south Albania. She described the ‘Greek invasion and the savage devastation’ and added ‘I spied the position of the Greek Army and of the relief work I undertook at Sir Harry Lamb’s request.’<sup>725</sup> This correspondence shows that there were occasions on which the British consulate relied on Durham’s information and actions as a trusted person, even though her information seemed to be mainly of a humanitarian character.

From further correspondence it could also be confirmed that by 1913 Durham and Lamb had established a friendly relationship and met often for lunch and tea. Likely as a result of frequent meetings with Durham, Lamb adopted a more positive approach towards the Albanian question in many of his reports to the Foreign Office and also reported to the Foreign Office about the atrocities of the First Balkan War. As a matter of fact, Lamb was not alone in reporting on this matter. Other disturbing reports reached the Foreign Office from British diplomats in Macedonia, mainly from Charles Greig’s despatches from Manastir, though the Foreign Office seems initially to have believed and endorsed only the reports sent from Belgrade by Dayrell Crackenthorpe, who was as ‘a man of pronounced Serbophile sentiment’.<sup>726</sup> It was only when the number of reports grew and the international and British press published details of the atrocities that the Foreign Office was persuaded to act. The British contacted the Serbian Prime Minister, Nikola Pašić, about the atrocities that the Serbian army had committed in the area of Manastir. Pašić replied by saying that he had no comment because ‘he did not know the prefect there personally’.<sup>727</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> Ibid.

<sup>724</sup> Edward Boyle (1878-1945) was also a Treasurer of the Serbian Relief Fund in 1914 and served as Acting British Commissioner for Serbia in 1915. After the First World War, Durham and Boyle became close friends. Boyle, who was a Serbophile, changed his mind and continued to view Serbia with some reservations. Most probably because of Durham, Boyle sympathised with the Albanian cause and even became a Secretary of the Anglo-Albanian Association, an organisation that derived from the Albanian Committee and on which we shall see more details in the next chapter.

<sup>725</sup> Durham to Boyle, 16 September 1943, MS 405/24, Nr. 122.

<sup>726</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 45; Richard Bassett, *For God and Kaiser: The Imperial Austrian Army, 1619-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 446.

<sup>727</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 45.

Lamb went further than reporting about atrocities that were committed throughout Kosovo and Macedonia. He criticised the Foreign Office for lacking courage and dignity and for not warning the Balkan League about the atrocities they had committed. Lamb maintained that it was not proper for the British government to conceal the bitter reality of atrocities out of fear of the reaction of the Muslims in India and other dominions.<sup>728</sup>

It is not easy to conclude whether Lamb fully supported Durham's political activity and her position on 'the Balkans for the Balkan people', but it is most certain that Lamb and Durham showed great respect for each other's work and agreed on most points regarding Balkan matters. The importance of Lamb to Durham was shown when she and Aubrey Herbert suggested in 1917 that the Foreign Office should form a group of diplomats and experts who would be consulted on and engaged in the reconstruction of the Balkan states. Durham put Harry Lamb on top of the list, considering him to possess the best knowledge on the Balkans and Albania and as someone 'whose qualifications are of the highest'.<sup>729</sup>

In her efforts to win British diplomats to her side, Durham also befriended Count de Salis, a prominent British diplomat who served in the Foreign Office in London from 1901 to 1906 and in several diplomatic missions as ambassador. De Salis also served as the British representative in Montenegro from 1911 to 1916.<sup>730</sup> It was during this period that Durham established contact with de Salis, with whom she maintained a friendly relationship until his death in 1939. When de Salis died, Durham revealed her close cooperation with him. She wrote to Edward Boyle:

A more upright, honest and clean minded man never existed. I always felt that Foreign Office did not make so much or such good use of him as it should have. We had a lot of men sent out there I paid no particular attention to him at first. But the Count when he found out I had been long in the Balkans asked me for information and at last used to entrust me with the task of finding out for him various things; what was going on up country; who was so & so, etc. When the

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<sup>728</sup> Lamb to Onslow, 30 April 1913, G173/21.

<sup>729</sup> Durham to Herbert, 5 April 1917, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>730</sup> 'Count de Salis: Former Minister to the Vatican', *The Observer*, 15 January 1939, p. 15 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/481643857?pq-origsite=summon>> [Accessed August 2016].

Balkan War broke out I was continually in touch with him and giving all the facts I could get.<sup>731</sup>

De Salis and Durham held identical views on the Balkans and from their correspondence it could be concluded that Durham had some influence on him. During and after the Balkan Wars they both rejected Pan-Slavism, Serbia's expansionist policy and disliked R. W. Seton-Watson. De Salis' views about the Balkans are to be seen from the official reports he sent from Montenegro to the Foreign Office<sup>732</sup> and from his private correspondence with Lord Onslow.<sup>733</sup> De Salis, like Durham, maintained that the region of Shkodra and the town itself was Albanian and was unjustly attacked by the Serbian and Montenegrin armies. In December 1912 de Salis wrote to Lord Onslow to find out the position of the Foreign Office on Shkodra and Albania. De Salis suggested that the idea of the Serbs and Montenegrins to rule over Albanians should not be approved.<sup>734</sup> In 1924 de Salis told Durham: 'I hold no brief for Orthodoxy'.

Durham also befriended Sir Maurice de Bunsen, another prominent diplomat who served as British ambassador in Vienna during the Balkan Wars and the beginning of the First World War. De Bunsen had informed Grey that Austria-Hungary was preparing a plan to attack Serbia but, according to Durham, Grey did not take de Bunsen's reports seriously. However, both de Salis and de Bunsen continued to support Durham morally. After the First World War they urged Durham to 'work out Serb guilt & publish it'.<sup>735</sup> On her side, Durham also urged de Salis and de Bunsen to publish their experiences or memoirs about the Balkan Wars and the First World War which would have exposed Serbia's guilt of aggression towards Albania and their 'responsibility for the Sarajevo crime'. Both abstained from expressing their opinions and experiences publicly out of 'some idea of loyalty to the FO [Foreign Office]'. To this Durham added: 'And now what might have been a very important book will never be written'.<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> Durham to Boyle, 18 January 1939, MS 405/24, Nr. 26.

<sup>732</sup> See: Montenegro: Annual Report 1913 (Count de Salis), 10 March 1914, NA, FO, 881/10422.

<sup>733</sup> In 1909 Lord Onslow became Assistant Private Secretary to Edward Grey and from 1911 to 1913 served as a Private Secretary to the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>734</sup> De Salis to Onslow, 13 December 1912, G 173/21.

<sup>735</sup> Durham to Boyle, 11 May 1939, RAI, MS 57: 5.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.



Harry Lamb and de Salis had played an important role in alarming the Foreign Office about the situation in Albania at the beginning of the Balkan Wars. When the Conference of Ambassadors was convened in London in December 1912, Albania was the subject about which Edward Grey was well informed and was urged to find a solution. However, Durham preferred to inform the public at home through the British press and thus to influence politicians. Being aware of the lack of knowledge on Albania in Britain, Durham was ready to speak to the people in any sort of conferences or meetings and continued to do so well after the Balkan Wars had ended.<sup>737</sup>

Observing closely the developments in Montenegro during autumn 1912, Durham could predict that the outbreak of war was a matter of days away. The Powers had not supported the request of the Albanians for autonomy or independence and the neighbouring countries were about to move into those Albanian *vilayets* ruled by the Porte. She also believed that Albanians had no leader like Giuseppe Garibaldi to unite them against the threats of their neighbours. As a result of these factors, Durham changed her previous position on the Ottoman Empire in relation to Albania and just before the outbreak of the Balkan Wars started to think that the immediate expulsion of the Ottomans from Europe was not necessary. When the Ottomans considered granting autonomy to Albania in August 1912, Durham suggested that the presence of the Ottoman regime should be continued for a couple more years. Within that suggested period, the Porte would have served 'as a kind of protective incubator' for the new Albanian state.<sup>738</sup> Only a year earlier Durham had criticised the Young Turks for exiling and imprisoning the majority of the best Albanian political activists and intellectuals and now, when educated Albanians were needed, even by the Young Turks, they were not available.<sup>739</sup>

#### The Balkan Wars and the rejection of the principle of nationality

With the start of the Balkan Wars, Durham discovered that the countries of the Balkan League had no intention of applying the principle of nationality or implementing the motto 'the Balkans for the Balkan people'. Until this point Durham had supported the Balkan

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<sup>737</sup> Durham to Herbert, 20 March 1918, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>738</sup> Tanner, p. 167.

<sup>739</sup> Durham to Spence, 30 August 1911, NA, FO, 371/1231, Enclosure 1 in 1.

League as she wished to see all Balkan nations freed from Ottoman rule. Durham was, most probably, the first female war reporter and in this capacity she witnessed the very start of the Balkan War, when the Montenegrin artillery fired towards Albania. At dawn on 9 October 1912, Durham went to Mount Gorica, near Podgorica and watched King Nikola ordering his heavy artillery to fire the first shot towards Albania. The First Balkan War had begun and Durham hurried off to send the news to England and made headlines for *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Chronicle*.<sup>740</sup>

As a Liberal Gladstonian she initially held an anti-Ottoman view and sided with Montenegro. She wrote in *The Nation* to say that 'Gladstone was right when he said that, bag and baggage, the Turk must go'.<sup>741</sup> On 15 October 1912 she went again as a reporter with the Montenegrin Army to witness the fall of Tuzi, an Albanian border town. She even congratulated Prince Danilo of Montenegro on the speedy victory which was achieved by his army. During the late afternoon, after the battle and war formalities between the Montenegrins and the Ottomans were over, Durham observed the sun going down and compared the end of the day with the end of the Ottoman Empire in Europe:

Then the slender crescent moon shone softly in the heavens – the only crescent now above the land, for the Turkish emblem has been howled down, we hope for ever.<sup>742</sup>

That evening she went back to Cetinje seated courteously in one of the government cars reserved for Montenegrin royalties and state functionaries. The day had ended in complete satisfaction for the Liberal Gladstonian that she was. To explain her feelings further, she added:

For many years I have given all my energy to the task – as far as one woman can help it – of releasing the European peoples from the Turkish yoke, and it seems that at last the goal is in sight.<sup>743</sup>

From the start of the Balkan Wars, Durham was also engaged in humanitarian relief work with the Montenegrin Red Cross, where she came to know about atrocities committed

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<sup>740</sup> Tanner, p. 167.

<sup>741</sup> Michail, p. 82.

<sup>742</sup> Edith Durham, 'How Tuzi Fell', *The Daily Chronicle*, 15 October 1912, RAI, MS 42:9.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

during the war. The start of the war marked a turning point in Durham's beliefs and political activities in the Balkans. In December 1912 she wrote in *The Nation* to explain that Albania was the reason for the eruption of the Balkan War. By giving testimonies of Serb actions, she also explained that atrocities were announced before the war had started. She gave the example of a Serb in Plava, Montenegro, who told her:

Last year [1911] the Malsori of Malsia e Madhe revolted. They fought fair; they never assaulted a woman, nor burnt a mosque, nor mutilated a body. They hoped Europe would intervene and protect them, and recognise that they had fought as civilised people. What did Europe do? She hurled those people back to the Turks who burnt, mutilated, and assaulted. This has taught us a lesson. Europe likes horrors. Very well - she shall have them. This war that is just going to begin will surpass all others. We will take eye for eye – head for head. Then perhaps Europe will be satisfied!<sup>744</sup>

Durham did not seem to believe in such 'announcements'. When the war started she was working as a nurse helping the Montenegrin army but subsequently left with many foreign doctors serving with the Red Cross. She believed that her work prolonged the unjust war and gave the Montenegrin army reinforcements once the soldiers recovered. The intentions of the wounded soldiers and the thoughts and actions of the Montenegrin and Serbian establishment, made her change her opinion of the situation. In a long and unpublished report about her relief work, she wrote:

The man of this last batch wanted only to be sufficiently cured to be able to be present at the looting of Scutari [...] The Montenegrin doctor under whom I was working said that he considered they were justified in cutting the throats of every woman and child in Scutari [Shkodra]. The King's cousin told me that in two years they would have stamped out the Albanian language. The Catholic Albanians resident in Podgoritza were continually insulted and threatened with the torments that would be shortly inflicted on their relatives in Scutari.<sup>745</sup>

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<sup>744</sup> Edith Durham, 'Miseria', *The Nation*, 21 December 1912, RAI, MS 54.

<sup>745</sup> Edith Durham, Relief work in Albania and Montenegro, RAI, MS 51:3.

Durham was terrified when a Serbian officer told her about his 'heroism' in Kosovo and 'nearly choked with laughter' as he told how he had 'bayoneted the women and children of Ljuma [Luma]'. Other officers told her that within a short time 'no one would dare speak that dirty language [Albanian]' in the newly occupied lands. They openly spoke about the violence which was being used in converting Muslim and Catholic Albanians into Christian Orthodox. Durham was also told that 'in one generation we shall thus Serbize the lot'.<sup>746</sup>

A day after Tuzi had fallen, Durham went to the town as a medical worker with the Montenegrin Red Cross. The mutilated bodies of the Ottoman soldiers terrified her. She reported this problem to the Montenegrin authorities with some strong comments. As a result, all newspaper correspondents were prohibited from going to Tuzi. After she made this discovery, the attitude of the Montenegrin authorities towards her changed. She saw many other unacceptable cases in hospitals. 'The war was to be one of the terrorism and extermination', she wrote in *The Nation*. It was not the liberation of the Balkan people she had expected but rather a war underpinned with religious character that she had believed would not happen. On this she wrote:

Tsar Ferdinand spoke the truth when he said the war was one of Cross vs Crescent. The Orthodox Cross drips red with blood of victims. They are not all Muslims. Orthodox fanaticism has not spared the Roman Catholics.<sup>747</sup>

Not long before the start of the First Balkan War, Durham was approached by Serbian diplomats in Montenegro who hoped to win her over to their side. She received a letter from the Serbian Legation which considered her as 'the greatest hope of the Serbs, the dearest, the darling and a lot more such stuff'.<sup>748</sup> She thought that the Serbs wanted to use her as a 'cat's paw for Serbia's ambitions'. She told Edward Boyle:

So I made no reply and never again communicated with that Legation. I was glad I did so, as the Serb atrocities in that war opened my eyes to what they were really up to with their Velika Srbija [Great Serbia].<sup>749</sup>

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<sup>746</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 202.

<sup>747</sup> Edith Durham, 'Frontiers and Fanaticism', *The Nation*, 26 July 1913, RAI, MS 54.

<sup>748</sup> Durham to Boyle, 11 May 1939, MS 405/30.

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

Durham did not approve of this policy which directly contradicted and violated the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' in which she believed and on which her activity was based. She finally broke with British Gladstonian Liberalism which, according to her, had helped to produce the violence in the Balkans. On this, Durham wrote:

What a humbug all that talk about 'freeing Xtians from the Turkish youke was!' that fanatic old Gladstone started in England. Never having lived out there he did not know what he was talking about.<sup>750</sup>

Defending this principle, she would soon change her mind about Austria-Hungary and the Balkan League. By the beginning of December 1912, the Balkan armies had complicated the situation in Albania and the Powers believed that it was time to intervene in order to avert a wholesale European war. On 17 December 1912, on the initiative of the British Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, the Powers and the Balkan countries gathered in London to find a solution. During the Conference of Ambassadors, Austria-Hungary and Italy were determined to show that Serbia, Greece and Montenegro were becoming a danger to peace in Europe because of their occupation of Albania. Vienna, aiming to check the territorial expansion of Serbia, proposed to create an independent Albania which would include most of the territory of what is today Kosovo.<sup>751</sup> This also meant that Greece, Serbia and Montenegro would not be able to divide Albania in the way they wished. Austria-Hungary kept insisting on the continuation of its established policy in the region under the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people'. Vienna used this policy as a 'back-up for the interdiction of a Serbian land-grab on the Adriatic,' which meant that Serbia would not be allowed to keep a port in the middle of a country inhabited by Albanians.<sup>752</sup>

Finally, the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' brought together Durham and the Austro-Hungarians. Strangely and unexpectedly, Durham's idea also received the support of R. W. Seton-Watson and a few other Gladstonians. R. W. Seton-Watson expressed disapproval with the Serbian government which was seeking a port at Durrës or Shën Gjin on the Albanian coast. In this regard he wrote that 'the Balkans for Balkan

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<sup>750</sup> Durham to Boyle, 8 September 1943, MS 405/120.

<sup>751</sup> Frank Maloy Anderson and Amos Shartle Hershey, *Handbook for the Diplomatic History of Europe, Asia, and Africa 1870–1914* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918), pp. 333–334.

<sup>752</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 282.

people' was his 'reason for approving of this war' but he disapproved of the Serbian occupation of the Albanian coast 'because it would make Albanian independence impossible'. R. W. Seton-Watson added that the Albanians should be counted as a Balkan people who deserved independence.<sup>753</sup>

However, this did not mean that Durham and R. W. Seton-Watson became friends. The very first disagreement between them was about the geographical size of independent Albania. Disagreements continued because R. W. Seton-Watson could not abandon his commitment to the pro-Serb or pro-Slav policies which Durham considered to be anti-Albanian. R. W. Seton-Watson's support for the Serbian government was shown in the correspondence he kept with a Serbian diplomat Stanoje Mihajlović. In a letter, dated 23 August 1913, Mihajlović thanked R. W. Seton-Watson and his wife for the 'warm feelings which were shown for Serbia' during the Balkan Wars. Mihajlović also thanked R. W. Seton-Watson 'in the name of the Serbian people' for his supportive writings in the British press, including the 'wonderful article' titled 'New Phases of the Balkan Question' that was published in *The Contemporary Review*, in which Serbian aims were 'explained properly'.<sup>754</sup>

When the Second Balkan War was over and peace was temporarily restored, the national question of the Balkan countries came up again for discussion among Gladstonians of the Balkan Committee. This discussion continued even after the First World War was over. Durham still supported the 'principle of nationality' and the ethnic distribution of Albanians which led the conflict with R. W. Seton-Watson to continue. In the Albanian case, R. W. Seton-Watson and Brailsford were in favour of applying the 'principle of civilisation' but differed in their reasons for supporting such an approach. Brailsford supported independence for Albania because he was convinced that the Albanians were 'equipped with a sufficient foundation of civilisation', yet R. W. Seton-Watson, supporting the national cause of the Slavs under Austro-Hungarian rule, maintained that Albanians should not enjoy more rights than the 'civilised subjects of Austria-Hungary'.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> Larry Wolff, 'The Western Representation of Eastern Europe on the Eve of World War I: Mediated Encounters and Intellectual Expertise in Dalmatia, Albania, and Macedonia', *The Journal of Modern History*, 86. 2 (2014), pp. 381-407 (p. 391).

<sup>754</sup> Александар Раствојић, *Велика Британија и Србија 1903-1914* (Београд: Историјски Институт, 2005), p. 394.

<sup>755</sup> James Perkins, 'The Congo of Europe: The Balkans and Empire in Early Twentieth Century British Political Culture', *The Historical Journal*, 58. 2 (2015), pp. 566-567 <[http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0018246X14000260](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0018246X14000260)> [accessed 20 August 2016].

During the Balkan Wars, the principle of ‘the Balkans for the Balkan people’ was overlooked by most of the Powers and by all countries of the Balkan League. Hence, from this point on, Durham showed full support for Austro-Hungarian plans and actions in the Balkans. This also meant that, from now on, Durham fully identified herself with the Albanian national cause and regarded as ‘our enemies’ all those who were against the Albanian national movement.<sup>756</sup> This could also be seen in how Durham referred to Esat Pasha Toptani by using the same language as any other Albanian nationalist. She regarded Toptani as a traitor when he surrendered Shkodra to the Montenegrins on 21 April 1913 and also saw him as the main obstacle to the establishment of the independent Albanian state.<sup>757</sup> However, in 1913 she viewed Italy as another obstacle to the independence of Albania and as a power friendly to Montenegro. On the occasion of the Shkodra crisis and, regarding the role of Italy, Edith Durham wrote:

Italy played an oddly double game. She was bound by Treaty to assist Austria to preserve the integrity of Albania. But she did not object to King Nikola-father of the Queen of Italy, taking the town if he could. Italy was striving for influence in Montenegro, out of hatred of Austria, and failed to see that the South Slav, not the German-Austrian, was her real danger.<sup>758</sup>

While the Conference of Ambassadors was in session during summer 1913, Durham went to south Albania, accompanied by Henry Nevinson, to report on the Greek occupation and atrocities in order to influence the decision-making process in London. At one point, while entering the Albanian town of Korça, a Greek officer whose government claimed that the town was Greek ordered Durham to stop or he would shoot if she preceded further. She continued walking and told him: ‘You can’t, I’m English’.<sup>759</sup> She wrote about this event, pointing out cynically that she was ready to risk her life for her principles and to show to the occupying armies, in this case the Greeks, that some people who belong to a particular European Power cannot be killed like the Albanians in Albania. Durham and Nevinson sent a telegram to Edward Grey, informing him and the Conference about Greek atrocities in the area. They also informed Grey that the town was entirely Albanian and refused the

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<sup>756</sup> Durham to Herbert, 11 March 1918, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>757</sup> Durham to Herbert, (undated) DD/DRU 47.

<sup>758</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 204.

<sup>759</sup> Tanner, p. 177.

presence of Greek troops. The telegram had an effect. The diplomats of the Conference approved this information and, as a result, it 'helped to save Koritza [Korça]' which remained within Albanian territory.<sup>760</sup>

The difficult situation of those Albanians who found themselves living in territories which came under Montenegrin and Greek occupation after 1913 led Durham to complain to the Foreign Office. Lord Vansittart, who later became the Permanent Undersecretary from 1930 to 1938, replied to Durham on behalf of the Foreign Office. His reply said that during the London Conference, the British government and the Powers made a commitment to guarantee equal religious and national rights as 'guaranteed by Treaty of Berlin'.<sup>761</sup> 'These rights guaranteed by the Treaty of Berlin simply do not exist', wrote Durham in reply. One important fact to be noted from this correspondence was that Durham had identified herself fully with Albania and the Albanian provisional government. In her reply to Vansittart, she blamed the Powers for not taking responsibility for Albania and asked for more British support:

Europe is greatly to blame in leaving us for so long time in an unsettled condition [...]. Can't you work so that our Albanian Government can be put on its feet an hour sooner? This delay and suspension will kill us. No country seems to me to take real interest in us. <sup>762</sup>

However, Durham's commitment to the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' distanced her from the Montenegrins and the Serbs because she did not approve of their disregard for this principle and the violence that they applied against the Albanians. The 'liberation' turned into the occupation of Albania and this made Durham strengthen her support for her principle. Because of this principle, Durham decided to end her friendship with the Montenegrin and Serbian regimes. In October 1913, she packed up the Gold Medal which was given to her by King Nikola of Montenegro and returned it to him. Regarding this decision, she wrote:

I had often expressed surprise at persons who accepted decorations from Abdul Hamid, and that now I knew that he and his subjects were even more cruel than

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<sup>760</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 247.

<sup>761</sup> Vansittart to Durham, 31 January 1914, NA, FO, 371/1892, Nr. 159.

<sup>762</sup> Durham to Vansittart, 1 February 1914, NA, FO, 371/1892, Nr. 4799.



the Turk I would not keep his blood-stained medal any longer. I communicated this to the English and Austrian Press. The order of St. Sava given to me by King Petar of Serbia, I decided to keep a little longer till some peculiarly flagrant case should occur, and this I expected soon.<sup>763</sup>

From this point on, Durham's work can be characterised as lobbying exclusively on behalf of Albania. Lobbying was underpinned with efforts to publicise atrocities that were committed against the Albanians. The Carnegie Report, produced by the International Commission to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan Wars which came out in 1914, confirmed the objectivity of Durham's writing on this subject. The Report proved that the Albanian civil population and their property suffered severely at the hands of the Serbian army.<sup>764</sup> Soon after this report, Durham wrote in *The Struggle for Scutari* that 'the destruction of the whole Albanian race was the avowed intention of both Serb and Montenegrin'.<sup>765</sup>

This led the Albanian leaders to use Durham's writings as strong proof to reinforce their nationalist discourse and argue against the violence of the invading or occupying armies. When the war was over, King Nikola of Montenegro, with whom Durham had ended a long friendship without any regret or hesitation, delivered a speech to his returned soldiers:

Your hands are stained with blood, my blessed soldiers, because you have broken the chains of slavery to your dearest brothers. The hopes of millions of living and dead Serbs are realised. [...] You took revenge for the failure in Kosovo and brought back and raised the honour of the Serbian arms. [...] Let us not forget that Europe took Shkodra from our hands [and] after 20 days we captured and lowered our flag there. We have not given away Shkodra because we do not give away our historic rights.<sup>766</sup>

The Montenegrins were angry with Britain since the international force which forced them to leave Shkodra was composed mainly of Britons and commanded by Admiral Cecil Burney (1858-1929). Burney, at the request of the London Conference, had blockaded the

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<sup>763</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 215.

<sup>764</sup> Report of the International Commission to Inquiry into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars (Washington: Carnegie Endowment, 1914), p. 149. See: Chapter IV.

<sup>765</sup> Durham, *Struggle for Scutari*, p. 239.

<sup>766</sup> Govor Kralja Nikole, XXIV/K.1-1-1913.

Montenegrin coastline and threatened to attack the Montenegrin army. The threat produced an effect and the Montenegrins left Shkodra,<sup>767</sup> but hatred against Austria-Hungary and Albania only rose in Montenegro. The Russian, French and Italian diplomats in Cetinje expressed similar feelings. Describing the feelings of Montenegrin officials and people in Podgorica, Edith Durham wrote:

Furious at losing Scutari [Shkodra], they swore they would retake it and take Bosnia, too. I told them not to talk so foolishly. They cried: 'We – the Serb people- have beaten the Turk. We are now a danger to Europe. We shall take what we please. The Serbs will go to Vienna. We shall go to Sarajevo. We have the whole Russian army with us. If you do not believe it – you will see. We shall begin in Bosnia!' This was in May 1913.<sup>768</sup>

This was how Durham wanted the world to see the atmosphere among the Serbs and Montenegrins after the Balkan Wars. Durham went on to underline that the Serbs and Montenegrins were dissatisfied and angry with the result of the Balkan Wars because they did not get enough territory from Albania, and Austria-Hungary was to be blamed. According to Durham, Albania, which became independent during the Balkan Wars, also became a prelude to another big war which would start within a year. When the First Balkan War ended, Durham's belief in the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' was shattered. The war had produced a result she had never imagined. On this regard she wrote:

And miseria is the price of war. 'The Balkan land for the Balkan people'. But the Balkan lands were but sparsely populated, and the victims are innumerable.<sup>769</sup>

When the armies of Montenegro and Serbia retreated from Shkodra in April 1913, an international force of nearly 2,000 soldiers and marines was dispatched to occupy the town. Admiral Burney was appointed President of a Provisional Administration whose jurisdiction extended only six miles around Shkodra.<sup>770</sup> In October that year Burney was replaced by General George Fraser Phillips (1863-1921). Durham was quick to establish

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<sup>767</sup> Elsie, *A Biographical Dictionary of Albanian History*, p. 59.

<sup>768</sup> Durham, *Twenty Years*, p. 205.

<sup>769</sup> Edith Durham, 'Miseria', *The Nation*, 21 December 1912, RAI, MS 54.

<sup>770</sup> William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors 1801-1927* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 508; Erwin A. Schmidl, ed., *Peace Operations Between War and Peace* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 8.

contact with Phillips and also discovered that her pro-Albanian friend Dr. Cunningham was also a friend of Phillips. After exchanging a few letters, Cunningham told Durham that General Phillips had 'changed his mind about the Serbs' and now 'we should stick out for complete independence under international guarantee'.<sup>771</sup> In one of her letters sent to Herbert, Durham wrote that 'Phillips had taken a much more helpful view of the situation'.<sup>772</sup> This meant that Phillips was supporting the Albanians, at least regarding the Shkodra issue. Until many years later Durham kept sending her books to Phillips and included other relevant books, such as Byron's works on Albania and Brailsford's on Macedonia.<sup>773</sup>

The importance of Harry Lamb grew when he was appointed as representative of the British government in the International Commission of Control, which was established on 29 July 1913 by the London Treaty of the Conference of Ambassadors. The headquarters of the Commission were in Vlora and its aim was to take care of the administration of Albania until permanent political and administrative institutions were established.<sup>774</sup> Harry Lamb pressured the Foreign Office on three points; 1. Nominating a civil governor for Shkodra; 2. Recognising the Albanian Provisional Government, and; 3. Considering an economic plan for the future of Albania. Lamb made this proposal with the purpose of exercising control or influence over the Albanian Provisional Government and improving the British position which, according to Lamb, was 'beginning to suffer loss of prestige'. By the end of October 1913, the Foreign Office had expressed its consent on all three points. 'I was from the beginning of [the] opinion that we ought to enter into official relation with Ismail Kemal as the "Autorité Existante" at Valona [Vlora]', wrote Lamb.<sup>775</sup>

Having in mind these developments, it could be concluded that the British policy was slowly taking a positive stance on Albania and Durham had certainly played an important role in this change. In spring of 1914 Albania was still in a state of devastation that was brought about by the Balkan Wars, but there was hope that things would be improved with the help of considerable British engagement. However, this situation was soon to change.

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<sup>771</sup> Durham to Herbert, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>773</sup> Barret to Durham, 23 May 1919, MS. 57/7.

<sup>774</sup> The International Commission of Control

<[http://nationalpubliclibrary.info/articles/eng/International\\_Commission\\_of\\_Control](http://nationalpubliclibrary.info/articles/eng/International_Commission_of_Control)> [accessed 10 September 2016].

<sup>775</sup> Lamb to Onslow, 23 October 1913, G 173/22.

### The debate about two principles

Durham left Albania in August 1914, a few days after the First World War had started. The way that the war had begun was against Durham's principles and all her expectations:

I learn to my amazement that not only had Britain declared war, but to my shame and disgust had done so on the side of the Slav. After that I did not really care what happened. The cup of my humiliation was full. [...] Had I had any money I should have gone to the Pacific islands, or anywhere out of the dirty squabbles of Europe.<sup>776</sup>

After arriving in London, the first thing she did was to send back to King Petar of Serbia the Order of St Sava he had given her. On 30 August 1914 she wrote a letter to consider him 'guilty of the greatest crime in history' because of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, which she considered as an attack on Austria-Hungary and on Europe.<sup>777</sup>

The situation in Albania was now similar to that of October 1912, when the First Balkan War had begun. Although greatly disappointed, she started again the same activity of saving Albania as the situation was reversed. To Durham this was a repeated episode of the Balkan Wars on which she wrote:

I hoped that when once Albania's independence was gained in 1913 I should never again have to wallow in these dirty Balkan politics. Then came the war of 1914-18 & it all had to be fought again.<sup>778</sup>

After she left in 1914 she visited Albania only once, in 1921. 'Tired. Don't feel as if my Albania existed any more', she wrote in her diary during the visit.<sup>779</sup> Durham's Albania was to include all Albanians in one state but she felt that the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' was only partially applied in this case. In London, defending this principle and on behalf of Albania, she never stopped debating with supporters of Serbia and later Yugoslavia, usually with R. W. Seton-Watson, Wickham Steed, Rebecca West and other Gladstonian Liberals.

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<sup>776</sup> Ibid, p. 239.

<sup>777</sup> Durham to Boyle, 4 January 1944, MS 405/154.

<sup>778</sup> Durham to Boyle, 11 January 1943, MS 405/94.

<sup>779</sup> Tanner, p. 215.

Although the Balkan Wars and the First World War were over, the debate about the causes and conduct of the war intensified in the British press between Durham on one side and R. W. Seton-Watson<sup>780</sup> and Henry Wickham Steed, a foreign correspondent from Vienna and foreign editor for *The Times*, on the other side. Albania and Serbia, and particularly the role of the Serbian state in atrocities against Albanians and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, were the key themes of the debate. R. W. Seton-Watson and his friend Steed were better placed in the academic world, the press and British politics but Durham was far more knowledgeable than the two about the Balkans. She couldn't win the fight against them but the debate helped her to keep the subject of Albania alive.<sup>781</sup> Debating R. W. Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed, Durham is remembered to have invented a jingle about them which became popular and she was very keen of using it often when writing on this matter:

SW, WS.

The two of them made

the hell of a mess!<sup>782</sup>

Durham asked R. W. Seton-Watson many times to debate the Balkan matters in person and publicly but he refused. 'I have never had any respect for him since I first met him in 1906 in Dalmatia,' wrote Durham about Steed'.<sup>783</sup> Durham, R. W. Seton-Watson and Steed continued to be members of the Balkan Committee despite the fact that they had different opinions on countries in this part of Europe. Durham held them responsible for the events that had taken a wrong turn during the Balkan Wars and First World War. She considered that they contributed to spreading the flame of war: 'Seton-Watson & Wickham Steed were like children who played with matches, throughout they had made a nice blaze and burned the house down'.<sup>784</sup>

The debate continued and Durham used all opportunities to put Albania in the centre of it, emphasising that the principle of nationality was not applied to Albanians and as a result

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<sup>780</sup> Robert William Seton-Watson was also the founder of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London and editor of the influential journal the *New Europe*.

<sup>781</sup> Tanner, p. 223.

<sup>782</sup> Durham to Boyle, 20 May 1943, MS 405/105.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid.

<sup>784</sup> Durham to Boyle, 24 August 1943, MS 405/116.

the Balkans will remain destabilised.<sup>785</sup> However, Durham is today far less known for her humanitarian work, another principle that she applied to all victims of war. Even when she wrote articles of a political nature she was keen to emphasise that she was also engaged in humanitarian work in the Balkans and asked for donations. In an article published in *The Manchester Guardian*, she thanked contributors to the *Albanian Relief Fund* and gave details of how the fund was distributed.<sup>786</sup> When Dr. Morant, the head of the publishing council of the *Royal Anthropological Institute*, asked Durham if she had collected poems or songs in Albanian and if she wanted to publish them, she replied:

You see so much of my strength was used up in relief work, feeding starving villages after the Balkan wars, getting houses reroofed, distributing seed corn, looking after wounded. Often 10 to 12 hours in the saddle & sleeping on ground with saddle under my head. Far too exhausted to remember words & grammar. And the wretched people were far too depressed to sing.<sup>787</sup>

Durham also expressed the value of humanitarian principles in an exchange of views with R. W. Seton-Watson. Regarding the appalling conditions of Albanians and others who were displaced and became refugees after the Balkan Wars and First World War, she wrote to R. W. Seton-Watson:

You seem to regard these populations as mere pawns to be shifted on the board according to political needs. To me they are all suffering human beings with whom I have been under fire - for whose sake I have risked enteric, smallpox & have wrestled with poisoned wounds. And with whom I have hungered and been half frozen. I feel it a duty to show the means by which they have been annexed and trampled on.<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>785</sup> Durham, determined to prove that the Serbian government was the 'organising force' behind the murder of Franz Ferdinand, published the book *The Sarajevo Crime* in 1925. R. W. Seton-Watson called *The Sarajevo Crime* a 'poisonous book' and not only anti-Serb but definitely possessing 'anti-British background' and 'treacherously anti-English' in character. As an answer to *The Sarajevo Crime*, R. W. Seton-Watson published *A Study in the Origins of the Great War*.

<sup>786</sup> Edith Durham, 'Relief work among the Albanians: Serbs' Work of Destruction', *The Manchester Guardian*, Oct 7, 1913, p. 10 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/475732449?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 10 August 2016].

<sup>787</sup> Durham to Morant, 28 May 1944, RAI, MS 43/1900-08.

<sup>788</sup> As cited in: Christian Medawar, *Mary Edith Durham and the Balkans 1900-1914* – PhD Theses (Montreal: McGill University, 1995), p. 145. <[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/webclient/StreamGate?folder\\_id=0&dvs=1466872093307~245&usePid1=true&usePid2=true](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1466872093307~245&usePid1=true&usePid2=true)> [accessed 24 June 2016].

Some members of the *Balkan Committee* had supported Durham's views and activities throughout. On 30 October 1944 some, including Noel Buxton and Edward Boyle<sup>789</sup> undertook an initiative to establish a fund as an expression to their grateful appreciation for Durham's 'distinguished scientific and political work in the Balkans'.<sup>790</sup> They planned to pass the fund to Durham, as a birthday present, to be used for a purpose she would choose herself. Durham died two weeks after this initiative was undertaken.

Several weeks after Durham's death, L. G. Wickham-Legg, editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography* asked R.W Seton-Watson if he could possibly write about Durham in this publication which had reserved 400 words for her. R. W. Seton-Watson never replied.<sup>791</sup>

### Conclusion

Durham's work showed that Liberal Gladstonians had artificially constructed an idea about the Balkans which was based on religion and, as such, reflected negatively on the Albanians. The Liberal's idea of 'illuminating' and liberating the Christians was not acceptable for Durham. Durham was among rare experts, travel writers and political activists who recognised that the conflict in the Balkans was in fact of a nationalist character. Therefore, the essence of her work was to correct this misguided approach of the Liberals. Durham's approach was inclusive as she insisted that both Christians and non-Christians should be supported in their efforts to liberate themselves from Ottoman rule.

Of all the British experts and travel writers on the Balkans of the twentieth century, Durham became the most important one. Durham, as a woman but also through her work, made a great impact on the countries she came to know and love. Within less than a decade she earned a reputation as an ethnographer, anthropologist, journalist, political activist, lobbyist and relief or humanitarian worker. She identified herself with the land and the people of the Balkans. Her views and support for Montenegrins, Serbs, Macedonians, and Albanians changed as a result of the historical developments that led to the Balkan

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<sup>789</sup> Sir Edward Boyle was an honorary secretary of the Balkan Committee and the father of Lord Boyle, who was a Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University from 1970 to 1981.

<sup>790</sup> Destani, *M. Edith Durham*, p. 228.

<sup>791</sup> Medawar, pp. 2-3.

Wars. More precisely, the expansionist policies of the countries of the Balkan League, the violence and the policy of the Powers, were the reasons that made Durham change her mind and her support for differing Balkan nations.<sup>792</sup>

Although she changed her views and the movements she supported, she continued to believe that the principle of 'the Balkans for the Balkan people' should be applied to all nations, including the Albanians. This was the reason that pushed Durham into confrontation with most of the Liberal Gladstonians who were members of the Balkan Committee and supporters of Slavic nations. The conflict intensified during the First World War and continued until the Second World War.

Durham's work showed that Liberal Gladstonians had artificially constructed an idea about the Balkans which was based on religion and, as such, reflected negatively on the Albanians. The Liberal's idea of 'illuminating' and 'liberating' only the Christian population in the Balkans was not acceptable for Durham. She was among the rare experts, travel writers or political activists who recognised that the conflict in the Balkans was nationalist in character. Therefore, the essence of her work was to correct the Liberal approach which she thought was erroneous.

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<sup>792</sup> Allcock and Young, pp. 9-10.



## Chapter VIII

### Aubrey Herbert, the Albanian Committee and Albanian Statehood

*Sir Edward Grey was always courteous and listened to facts and figures that were not official and did all in his power to mitigate the sufferings of the Albanians. In the face of strong opposition, he recognised publicly that the Albanians had the same right to nationality and autonomy as any other people in the Balkans. The Greeks had been helped by Byron, and the Slav nations had Russia behind them. The Serbs and the Bulgars had the liberal inheritance of Gladstone's speeches and the active support of the Buxtons and the Balkan Committee, and the Albanians, who were the smallest in population and the most ineffectively equipped, received their title-deeds, which their neighbours would have stolen from them, at the hands of Lord Grey. - Aubrey Herbert<sup>793</sup>*

### Introduction

Aubrey Herbert arrived in the Balkans for the first time in 1904. Landing at Salonika, Herbert visited most of the region and, by 1912, Albania had become his principal interest. In 1913 he went to Vlora, the seat of the Albanian Provisional Government. There a large

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<sup>793</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. 215.

crowd of people gathered in front of the house where he was staying and cheered for Britain. Herbert gave a speech and explained to them the work of the Albanian Committee, the organisation he had formed in London to lobby on behalf of Albania. They cheered again, saluted and called him the 'Paladin of Liberty'. Historian Larry Wolff wrote that this 'scenario resembled R. W. Seton-Watson's triumphal voyage' a year earlier, in Dalmatia, Croatia, where he was saluted and cheered for representing the Slavs to Great Britain.<sup>794</sup>

Given Herbert's immense popularity among Albanians, the aim of this chapter is to examine British involvement in the Albanian question through his support for and contribution to championing Albania's right to statehood. Herbert's contribution during the crucial period 1912-1914 will be illustrated through his engagement as a travel writer and politician and his work with the Albanian Committee. The knowledge and experience that Herbert gained by spending considerable time in the Ottoman Empire, Macedonia and Albania led him to disagree with Britain's foreign policy, which was still considerably affected by Liberalism. He therefore entered politics in 1911 with the intention of changing the existing policy towards the region and, by 1912, his main interest became the creation of an Albanian state.

The activities of the Albanian Committee, which was formed on Herbert's initiative in December 1912, will be central to this chapter. The aim of the Committee was to influence the British public and policy-makers to adopt a favourable approach towards the Albanian national cause and support the establishment of an Albanian state. It will be argued that in order to achieve these aims, the Committee rejected the Liberal approach that had formerly dominated foreign policy thinking. Despite some difficulties, the Committee managed to bring the Albanian question into the public sphere and achieved some success in pursuit of its aims.

The official view of the British government towards the creation of the Albanian state was best represented by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey. Grey's position will be examined through his work as foreign secretary and the proceedings of the London Conference, which he chaired from December 1912 to August 1913. Although the London Conference was convened to decide the future of Albania and has since been studied in great detail, this chapter will only deal with the part the British government played in it,

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<sup>794</sup> Wolff, *The Western Representation*, p. 390.

which has not been properly explained thus far. From an Albanian perspective, Grey played a positive role by supporting the establishment of an independent state, for which he was praised by Herbert. In contrast, Grey himself maintained that he played only a neutral role throughout the Conference but, as will be shown, he often took sides by supporting or rejecting proposals made by the Powers. By promoting a balance between the Powers, it could be argued that Grey's work was in fact detrimental to the creation of an Albanian state along ethnic lines, as Herbert and the Albanian Committee had advocated.

In addition, this chapter will argue that while the British government did not show much interest in the state-building process other actors did play a positive role. This can be seen namely in the actions of British officials in Albania and members of the International Commission of Control, which was created following the London Conference of Ambassadors in 1913 to oversee the creation of the new Albanian state, and the International Force which was dispatched to Shkodra.

Aubrey Herbert is author of the following books: *Mons, Anzac & Kut: a British Intelligence Officer in Three Theatres of the First World War, 1914-18*; *Eastern Songs*; and *A Record of Eastern Travel*. These works are explored in this chapter in order to understand Herbert's activities. By 1923 Herbert had become an important personality in British political life and overseas service but, after his premature death that year, he faded from memory and within a decade was almost entirely forgotten. It is possible that the marginality of the Albanian question in Britain contributed to his subsequent anonymity, despite the important role he played in British diplomacy during his lifetime. Yet the lack of writings about Herbert stem mainly from the reluctance of his widow, Mary Herbert, for people to document his work. She regarded the practice of biography writing as a 'vulgar breach of privacy'. When Mary died in 1970, Herbert's papers were deposited in different archives.<sup>795</sup> This chapter, in most parts, is based on these documents which today are to be found in the Somerset Heritage Centre and British National Archives.

In 1983 Aubrey Herbert's niece wrote the biography *The Man Who Was Greenmantle* and brought to light aspects of Herbert's work. Another important book on Herbert's life, *Albania's Greatest Friend – Aubrey Herbert and the making of modern Albania*, was

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<sup>795</sup> Fitzherbert, p. 3.

published in 2011. The book is a compilation of documents and, as the title suggests, shows Herbert as Albania's greatest friend in the English-speaking world.<sup>796</sup>

In many ways Herbert was a hero to Albanians and, in 1913, they even offered him the crown of their kingdom. Three years after he died, an Albanian newspaper published a front page article on his life and contribution to Albania under the title: 'Albania will never forget its friends and their names in our history will be written in gold'.<sup>797</sup> Yet, as Noel Malcolm noted in the preface of *Albania's Greatest Friend*, after 1945 nobody in Albania knew who Aubrey Herbert was. This was the result of the official ideology of the communist regime which made Herbert, a member of the British ruling class and descendant of a family of landowners, politically unwanted and rarely mentioned. Herbert and his work continue to be relatively unknown in Britain, Albania and Kosovo even today and this chapter therefore aims to fill this gap.

#### Aubrey Herbert's developing interest in the Albanian national cause

Aubrey Herbert was born on 3 April 1880 at Highclere Castle in Hampshire, the son of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carnarvon.<sup>798</sup> As the second son, Aubrey would follow the tradition of aristocratic English families by serving in British diplomacy while his older brother, George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert (1866–1923), would retain the title of 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carnarvon. Their father had twice served as Colonial Secretary, as well as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and was also known as a classical scholar.<sup>799</sup>

After Eton, Herbert went to Balliol College, Oxford and joined a generation of Etonians recorded as the 'most brilliant and wild Balliol men,' of which 'Herbert was the extreme example'. At Oxford he maintained the highest grades but remained a famously riotous member of the Annandale Club, a dining club used as a forum for debating political issues.<sup>800</sup> Herbert became close friends with Raymond Asquith, son of Herbert Asquith (1852-1928), who later served as Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916. His friendships with

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<sup>796</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. xii-xiv.

<sup>797</sup> Shqipnia miqt e vet s'i harron kurr, *Afrimi*, 3 Korrik 1926, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>798</sup> Herbert, Aubrey Nigel Henry Molyneux, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/37534>> [accessed 11 September 2016].

<sup>799</sup> L. E. Jones, *An Edwardian Youth* (London: Macmillan, 1956), p. 49.

<sup>800</sup> John Jones, *Balliol College: A history* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 229.

future politicians George Lloyd and Mark Sykes, which started at Oxford, continued throughout their parliamentary careers. At Oxford Herbert also befriended the novelists Compton Mackenzie<sup>801</sup> and John Buchan, with the latter describing Herbert as ‘a man of genius’ who would ‘take more than mortal risks’ in his life.<sup>802</sup>

Coming from the British ruling class and with such a wide circle of important friends, Herbert was guaranteed to have a bright future. Buchan, the author of *Thirty-Nine Steps*, used Herbert’s autobiography *Ben Kendim* to construct *Greenmantle*, a famous novel published in 1916 in which Herbert is understood to be Sandy, the main character.<sup>803</sup> The structure of *Greenmantle* was also based on Herbert’s activities as described in his war diaries, the first of which was written in a hospital in Mons; the second focused on the Dardanelles and Gallipoli and the third dealt with the fall of Kut.<sup>804</sup>

Herbert was also portrayed in the film *Lawrence of Arabia* as a secondary character to T. E. Lawrence. In reality, T. E. Lawrence was sent to Mesopotamia in 1916 on a secret mission as an assistant to Aubrey Herbert, who was at that time head of naval intelligence in the region. A year earlier, Herbert had arranged a truce between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain to bury the dead at Gallipoli and was respected on both sides, while in Constantinople he was seen as a Turcophile. In Britain his wife often dined at 10 Downing Street.<sup>805</sup>

So, how and why was Aubrey Herbert interested in the Albanian national question?

In 1904, after spending a few months at the British Embassy in Tokyo and visiting Cyprus and Athens, Herbert reached Salonika, a multi-national city that he liked and where he met ‘a wild Albanian highlander’ named Kiazim [Qazim] Kukeli. Herbert employed Kukeli as a body-guard and servant and he became Herbert’s long term companion, instilling in

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<sup>801</sup> Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 36.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>803</sup> John Buchan, *Greenmantle* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. xii.

<sup>804</sup> Aubrey Herbert, *Mons, Anzac and Kut – A British Intelligence Officer in Three Theatres of the First World War, 1914-18* (London: Leonaur, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>805</sup> Harold Orlans, *T.E. Lawrence: Biography of a Broken Hero* (London: Mc Farland & Company, 2002), p. 27.

Herbert an interest in Albania through his 'edifying stories' about Albanian *komitadjis* (rebels or guerrillas).<sup>806</sup>

In Salonika Herbert enjoyed spending time with Ottoman intellectuals, including Riza Tewfik Bey (1869 – 1949), an Albanian poet, philosopher and statesman who liked discussing John Stuart Mill. While in Greece and Crete, Herbert had held anti-Turkish prejudices, but began to change his opinion while travelling in Macedonia with Kukeli. Herbert wrote to his mother from Macedonia saying that Christians were unattractive and inferior compared to 'the genial, polished Turk'.<sup>807</sup> Herbert, like Edith Durham, despised Macedonian Christians but was convinced that they were put to this position as a result of the cruelty and injustice of the Ottoman regime.<sup>808</sup>

In Constantinople, as honorary attaché, Herbert was quick to make friends in high Ottoman society and was even presented to the Sultan. Herbert found Constantinople a very pleasant city and liked the Turks, but told his mother that he 'can't understand anyone being a Turcophile'. In 1908 Herbert supported the Young Turks and their revolution, hoping that they would bring about changes in the Ottoman Empire.

Despite his forays into Ottoman and Albanian society, Macedonia remained Herbert's primary interest at this time. From early on Herbert understood that the problem in Macedonia was not one of religion, as Liberals had consistently argued, but was of a nationalist character.<sup>809</sup>

This insight was reflected in Herbert's involvement with the Balkan Committee, where he held an opinion different to those Liberal Gladstonians who constituted the vast majority of members. Almost a decade later, during the Balkan Wars, his position on the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire at large was completely changed and had become broadly anti-Liberal. This change could be seen in a note he wrote to his brother, Mervyn, in July 1913:

Ten years ago I went to Turkey, strongly anti-Turk, ready in fact to write pamphlets on its government in Macedonia, and it was only the fact that I was able to compare, in the archives of the Embassy, the way in which Turks and Bulgars behaved in Macedonia that

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<sup>806</sup> Elsie, *A Biographical Dictionary*, pp. 200-2001.

<sup>807</sup> Fitzherbert, pp. 44-47.

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>809</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, pp. 3-4.

completely changed my sympathies. For the Turk is the one man in the Balkans whom I have known who is a gentleman.<sup>810</sup>

As a traveller and journalist, Herbert had visited the Albanian part of the Balkans in 1907 and acquired further knowledge about the place and its people. After witnessing the solemn opening of the new Ottoman Parliament in December 1908, Herbert travelled through Macedonia to Kosovo, a visit that would bring him close to the Albanian national cause. On 2 January 1909 he went to Mitrovica and discovered that many Albanians who had supported the Revolution were now expressing doubts about its success. In June 1909 he went to south Albania and published a few articles under his pen name *Ben Kendim*. Most of his articles from that time, which were dedicated to the British public, contained basic, informative knowledge about Albania and the Albanians. However, there was an article with a political message which he titled 'Southern Albania and Epirus'.<sup>811</sup> As seen from the title, Herbert sought to distinguish the Albanian part of the south from Greek Epirus or northern Greece. This was done deliberately in order to reject the term Epirus, with which the Greeks had named the entire area of what was later to become south Albania. For unknown reasons the article remained unpublished, but its significance in indicating where Herbert's sympathies lay is clear.<sup>812</sup>

By 1910, British politics and diplomacy were beginning to diverge from the views Herbert had formed about the Ottoman Empire and so he decided to play an active role in changing this course. In a by-election in November 1911, Herbert won the South Somerset seat for the Conservatives against the Liberal candidate Edward Strachey, and from 1918 to his death in 1923 he represented the Yeovil constituency.<sup>813</sup> In his first speech to the House of Commons of 14 December 1911, Herbert criticised British policy towards Ottoman reforms for being 'stonily indifferent,' adding that the Young Turk Revolution was 'an experiment that deserved more sympathy than it got from the Liberal Government'. Making an appeal

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<sup>810</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

<sup>811</sup> *Ben Kendim*, Southern Albania and Epirus, DD/DRU 35.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>813</sup> 'Conservatives win in Yeovil', *Yeovil Press* <<http://www.yeovilpress.co.uk/blog/2015/05/08/election-day-blog-conservatives-win-in-yeovil/>> [accessed 21 October 2016].

for a 'cordial consideration of the whole Turkish question', Herbert's criticism of Liberal policy can be seen as indicative of his Conservative approach to the matters at hand.<sup>814</sup>

When speaking of troubles in the Ottoman Empire Herbert did not specifically mention Albania, seeing their question as part of the broader Balkan problem. However, Herbert did speak about the insurrection which had started in Albania in September 1911, for which he blamed the British government's apparent indifference to events. This gave Hugh Alexander Law (1872-1943), who represented the Irish constituencies of County Donegal, chance to speak and hail Herbert's speech as 'extremely brilliant'. Law added that while it was true the British government reigned over many millions of Muslim subjects, it was also true that Great Britain was 'a great Christian country – a country which both naturally and by actual treaty obligations owes certain duties to the Christian subjects of the Turkish Empire'.<sup>815</sup> Though Herbert found some supporters for his views, the vast majority of the House shared Law's favouring of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire.

In August 1912, when the Albanian nationalist movement had successfully influenced the Porte's attitude towards granting it autonomy, Herbert went to Kosovo. His aim in doing so was to collect information from Albanian leaders about their future intentions, coordinate plans with them and influence public discourse in Britain. He wrote about his journey to the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar, a region which he called the 'Albanian borderland' in a bid to demonstrate to the British public the northern border of Albania, as he had done earlier with the southern border with Greece.<sup>816</sup> In private Herbert held a different opinion. In his diary he described Novi Pazar as a 'no man's land, occupied by the Turks, held precariously by the Albanians, ruled by none'.<sup>817</sup> He also emphasised that there were indications that 'with the growing feeling of nationality among the Albanians' the responsibility of Albanian leaders was taking steps towards championing the cause of the Christians in this part of Albania. This fact was also recorded by Ottoman officials. A report sent from Kosovo to

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<sup>814</sup> Mr. Herbert Speeches, *Parliamentary Debates*, pp. 2565- 2571, DD/DRU 41.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 2571-2574.

<sup>816</sup> Ben Kendim, 'From Novi Bazar to Uskub [Skopje] – in the Albanian Borderland', *Morning Post*, Thursday, 19 September 1912, DD/DRU 43.

<sup>817</sup> Fitzherbert, p. 107.



Constantinople noted that Isa Boletini was enlarging his group of Albanian fighters and was planning either to include Serbs among their ranks or to protect them.<sup>818</sup>

In another article, published in *The Morning Post*, Herbert explained the Albanians' belief that they needed foreign protection.<sup>819</sup> By now a Turcophile, it is likely Herbert believed autonomy would satisfy Albanian nationalist needs and that they would feel comfortable within the new Young Turk regime. However, within less than a month, the First Balkan War of October 1912 markedly changed this situation and Herbert began to advocate the independence of Albania as opposed to autonomy. One of his immediate actions was to distance himself completely from the Balkan Committee, which he believed was only looking after the national interests of the Christian Slavs and thus ignoring the Albanians.

The lack of interest in Albania shown by the Balkan Committee can be seen in its activities throughout the Balkan Wars. Towards the end of July 1913, the Balkan Committee issued a resolution asking the Powers to intervene to end the conflict between the Balkan Allies and free the Christian population from Ottoman rule. The resolution stated that there was no other solution for the Balkans except the 'bag and baggage – the Turk out of Constantinople and the Turk out of Europe'. The resolution also stated that the Christian Allies should be permitted to 'reap fruits of their handsome victory' because 'they were not ashamed or afraid to appeal to force'.<sup>820</sup>

On 1 August 1913, the Committee sent a letter to the Foreign Office, regarding the 'recognition of nationalities', asking the Powers and the British government to recognise the occupation of Macedonia by the Allied armies. The Albanians of Macedonia were not mentioned at all. The Committee asked the British government, which had accepted the leadership of the Concert of Europe, to impose an active policy in 'promoting humane government'.<sup>821</sup> A few weeks later, Arthur Symonds, the Secretary of the Balkan Committee, wrote a letter to *The Times* criticising the British press for publishing items about atrocities that the Allied armies committed against non-Christians: 'What good can

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<sup>818</sup> Ottoman Legation in Belgrade to Ottoman Foreign Ministry, HR.SYS. 151 60 2 1912 07 06.

<sup>819</sup> Ben Kendim, 'A Near Eastern Journey', *The Morning Post*, 17 September 1912; DD/DRU 41.

<sup>820</sup> 'The Turk out of Europe: Balkan Committee Meeting at Westminster', *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 Jul, 1913, p. 5 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/475670700?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 31 October 2016].

<sup>821</sup> The Balkan Committee to Foreign Office, 1 August 1913, NA, FO, 371/1893, Nr. 35809.

come of repeating and publishing them?', asked Symonds.<sup>822</sup> The actions of the Balkan Committee, as a Liberal Gladstonian organisation, can thus be seen as positioning themselves against the Ottoman Empire, favouring the Allies in the outcome of the First Balkan War, and ignoring the Albanian national question. Herbert, being simultaneously pro Turkish and pro-Albanian, could not continue being a member of this Liberal organisation. He therefore resigned from the Committee, stating its support for the claims of the Balkan Allies, the Serbian massacres committed against Albanians and the Bulgarian massacres committed against Muslims, none of which were condemned by the Committee, as his reasons.<sup>823</sup>

### The Albanian Committee

When the First Balkan War started, Herbert was concerned that Albanian lands would be partitioned. As a result, he decided to campaign against the occupation of territories by the Allied armies and formed an alternative organisation to the Balkan Committee designed to support the Albanian national cause. On 9 December 1912 Herbert sent invitations informing interested personalities that:

The question of Albanian Autonomy differs considerably from the questions of other Balkan States, as it is one of nationality, not of religion. The Albanians, as an ancient race (the original Macedonians), are surrounded to-day by people who threatened their national ideals with destruction. As Albania may be sacrificed at any moment to the exigencies of diplomacy, an immediate effort is called for. In view of the urgency of the Albanian question and the importance of the Anglo-Muhammedan situation, the Committee, which has no party ties, invites you to join it.<sup>824</sup>

On 17 December 1912, the same day that the Conference of Ambassadors convened in London, Herbert held a meeting with those who answered his call and agreed to form the Albanian Committee.<sup>825</sup> All became members of this new organisation, although the

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<sup>822</sup> Arthur Symonds to the editors of the Times: *Balkan Atrocities and Balkan Distress*, 29 August 1913, DD/DRU 4/4.

<sup>823</sup> The Balkan Committee, 'Mr. A. Herbert's Retirement', *The Press*, XLIX. 14562, 13 January 1913 <<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP19130113.2.82.2>> [accessed 16 October 2016].

<sup>824</sup> The Albanian Committee, 1912, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>825</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 65.

reasons for their decision to join varied widely. Many were more interested in opposing the new situation in the Balkans created by the advance of the Allied armies than solving the Albanian question specifically. Some were Turcophiles, and as such, against any enemies of the Ottoman Empire. Some were supporters of the principle of self-determination and wanted this principle to be applied to Albania as it was to other Balkan nations. The Albanian Committee also attracted Muslims and British imperialists who were concerned about the reaction of the Muslim dominions of the British Empire. The Committee was particularly attractive to Jews, whose brethren had suffered persecution at the hands of the Allied armies and who hoped for tolerance in the future Albanian state.

Hostility towards Russia, the force behind the Allied armies, also brought to the Committee the ideological heirs of Disraeli as well as radicals and socialists who opposed Russia's pan Slav policy. There were also members of various pressure groups who favoured the independence of small countries, many of whom had no previous knowledge of or connection with the Albanian national cause but now showed an interest in seeing Albania as an autonomous or independent country. Above all, the Albanian Committee brought together all those who held anti-Liberal views and who opposed the effects of this policy in the Balkans. Those who took principal interest in the work of the Committee were C. F. Ryder, Mark H. Judge, J. C. Paget and Major Paget. Herbert recalled later that it was only he and Major Paget who had lived in Shkodra and who had 'actual acquaintance' with Albania, while 'the others were prompted by a generous love for freedom'.<sup>826</sup> Two other important personalities, Edith Durham and Captain MacRury, joined the Committee later.

Aubrey Herbert was elected President of the Albanian Committee, while Lord Lamington (1860-1940), a Conservative MP and former Governor of Queensland and Bombay, was elected Vice President. Mark H. Judge (1847-1927), founder of the University Extension Guild and chairman of the British Constitutional Association, was elected Treasurer while John C. Paget, also from the British Constitutional Association, was elected Honourable Secretary. The Executive Committee included personalities such as Dr. Moses Gaster (1856-1949), Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic Jews in Britain from 1887 to 1919 and a well-known British intellectual. 'Had he not been a rabbi, Gaster might have succeeded Theodor Herzl

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<sup>826</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. 210.

as the leader of the World Zionist Organization upon Herzl's untimely death in 1904', - wrote Michael Berkowitz, a Jewish historian.<sup>827</sup> Gaster joined the Albanian Committee in search of a solution for the Jews in Macedonia, but he also had an interest in Albania as a scholar linguist and known collector of books on Albania.

Other Jewish members of the Committee shared Gaster's search for a solution for the Jewish population of Macedonia who were opposed to Greek and Bulgarian rule. They increasingly pushed the idea of an autonomous Macedonia which coincided with Herbert's aims, albeit for different reasons. Although Herbert's aim was to focus the Committee's activity on the Albanian question, the influence of the Jews grew so great that Herbert told his wife they 'have made a desperate effort to get hold of the Albanian Committee'.<sup>828</sup>

The Liberal policy of supporting only Christian groups in the Balkans had contributed to worsening inter-religious relations in the region. Though the aim of the Albanian Committee was to assist in the establishment of an autonomous Albania, their members also identified the lack of knowledge about the Balkans as an obstacle to their future activities. Therefore, the Committee also aimed to 'develop a wider knowledge of the Balkan problem and to promote a good understanding' between Christians and Muslims. Mark H. Judge believed that the Committee should 'send a much-needed message of good will' to the Muslims of the world and assure the Muslims of the British Empire that the British still 'upheld the principle of freedom as necessary for the maintenance of the Empire'.<sup>829</sup>

The counter-Liberal view of the Committee was manifested by all members including Gaster who maintained that Muslims and Jews were ignored by the British government and the public. Gaster complained about the Greek suppression of stories detailing atrocities in their occupied territories, adding that the Greeks could not ignore the fact that the Albanians were most cruelly treated and this 'treatment should certainly be brought to the public knowledge'.<sup>830</sup> Samuel Levy Bensusan (1872-1958), also a Sephardi Jew, journalist

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<sup>827</sup> Michael Berkowitz, 'Moses Gaster' *UCL Library* <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/special-collections/moses-gaster>> [accessed 30 October 2016].

<sup>828</sup> Destani and Jones, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 87.

<sup>829</sup> The Albanian Committee, *Report of First Meeting*, pp. 2-3, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

and travel writer,<sup>831</sup> saw the work of the Albanian Committee as a way of helping the Muslim, Christian and Jewish worlds to understand each other. He believed that if the Committee succeeded in its objectives it would not only be doing a service to Britain, but to the world at large.<sup>832</sup>

Most of the speakers maintained that it was necessary to win over the British public and government in order to reverse British Liberal policy but winning such support proved problematic. The Committee prepared a report explaining the result of the meeting and the aims of the Committee and sent it to most of the newspapers in Britain. None of the newspapers published it. The future state of Albania, with a Muslim majority and Christian and Jewish minorities which would serve as an example of religious cooperation was apparently not an interesting subject for the British press. The report did appear on the front page of *The Times* but only as an announcement paid for by the Committee. The Albanian Committee would soon intensify the pressure for their cause, leveraging their impressive list of twelve MPs, a Lord Justice of Appeals, a Privy Councillor, two peers, a Chief Rabbi and many other dignitaries. Despite this list of influential figures, however, the group was not as powerful as the Balkan Committee which for a decade had cultivated the Gladstonian tradition.<sup>833</sup>

The Committee worked in close collaboration with the Albanian Provisional Government and organised a visit by an Albanian delegation, consisting of Filip Noga, Mehmet Bey Konitza and Rashit Bey Dino, which arrived in London in January 1913. Since the Albanian Provisional Government was not officially recognised, these delegates could not participate in the work of the London Conference. However, Herbert and other members of the Committee assisted the delegation in presenting a memorandum on Albanian claims to the Conference and the Foreign Office.<sup>834</sup> They also distributed a map of Albania, lobbied to influence British politicians and diplomats at the Conference, publicise the Albanian national cause represented by the delegation and raise funds for refugees in Albania.<sup>835</sup>

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<sup>831</sup> Bensusan, 'Samuel Levy' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/66987>> [accessed 25 October 2016].

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>833</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 72.

<sup>834</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.

<sup>835</sup> DD. DRU 31, See Appendix 3.

In early May, Ismail Qemali attended a meeting of the Albanian Committee and told members that his government and the Albanian people 'have preserved the hope that the English nation would not forget us'.<sup>836</sup> Herbert made efforts to arrange meetings between Ismail Qemali and Edward Grey, though this ended without success because the British government still did not recognise the Albanian Provisional Government at this stage. The Foreign Office wrote to Ismail Qemali to explain 'with regret' that Grey was 'busy with parliamentary work'.<sup>837</sup>

The press likewise continued to show no interest in the Albanian question. The visit of the Albanian delegation led the Committee to intensify its work and find ways of reaching the British public. Gaster emphasised the need to 'stir up public opinion in order to make people realise the claims of the Albanians' whose aim was to 'establish themselves according to their race, faith and customs'.<sup>838</sup> Gaster believed that in order to do so reports of atrocities committed against Albanians should be made known to the British public, together with emphasising the need to create an ethnic Albania. Questions were asked about the atrocities in the House of Commons, but Gaster regarded the replies as unsatisfactory. Speaking further on this matter in a Committee meeting, he added that it was essential for the Albanians to be included within borders on an ethnic basis and irrespective of religion.<sup>839</sup>

In many respects Gaster's speech became important for the future work of the Committee. The Committee published several documents by May 1913 on the subject of influencing the public.<sup>840</sup> The *Plea of Albania* was one such work created on behalf of the Albanian Provisional Government and submitted to the London Conference to counter the Greek claim in southern Albania. This publication aimed to present the fact that, during the Conference, the Greek government did not distinguish between the question of religion and that of nationality.<sup>841</sup> Unwilling to recognise separate nationalities, the Greek

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<sup>836</sup> The Albanian Committee Meeting, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>837</sup> Foreign Office to Kemal Bey, ? May 1913, 5537/7/78.

<sup>838</sup> The Albanian Committee Report of 5 February 1913, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid.

<sup>840</sup> Albanian Committee Publications 1912-1913: The most important publications were: the report of the first meeting which was held at the Whitehall in 17 December 1912; the *New Crusader* 1912, written by C. F. Ryder; The Albanian congress at Trieste, March 1913; The *Plea of Albania*, with maps and statistical information about the population of Albania and; The future of Albania - Reply of the Albanian delegates to the Greek claims; DD/DRU 31.

<sup>841</sup> Charles Woods, 'Albania and the Albanians', *The Geographical Review*, 5 4 (1918), pp. 257-273 (p. 262). - The Ottoman regime had not included the Albanians in a 'millet' as were Bulgarians, Greeks or Serbs who developed their

government, like the Ottoman government, divided the Albanians into two distinct categories: Muslims and Christians. As a result of this ambiguity the number of inhabitants and the percentage of Greeks and Albanians in south Albania was grossly disputed by both sides.<sup>842</sup> The Committee believed the Greek approach was a mistake and aimed to correct it.

The most important publication following Gaster's speech, *Albania for the Albanians*, came from Leeds in the form of a letter to the press written by C. F. Ryder on behalf of the Albanian Committee. The letter was in fact a criticism of Liberal ideas in Britain and their impact on policy in the Balkans.<sup>843</sup> Ryder explained that the problem of the Albanian question in Britain was primarily the result of a lack of knowledge about Albania on the part of the British public. He further explained that, if there was some knowledge on this matter, the problem was in fact even greater. Ryder believed that the religious prejudices held by the Powers, the British government and the public led them to ignore the Albanian question on the grounds that they were a non-Christian population. Ryder criticised the Powers and the British government for supporting the 'stronger races over the weaker ones'. He pointed out that in the Albanian case, contrary to the position it had adopted in the case of Montenegro, the British public and government regarded the formation of the Albanian state along ethnic lines as impracticable. On this matter Ryder also criticised the press, politicians, and above all intellectuals, for not adopting the same position towards Albania as they did towards other Balkan nations. Ryder elaborated:

Men whose fathers applauded and supported Mazzini and Garibaldi in the fight for freedom, and who themselves would shrink with horror from the idea of restoring the Papacy to the territories torn from it by Italy, are loud in their demands for the suppression of Albanian liberty, for the forcible 'restoration' of Albanian towns and the surrender of Albanians to the tender mercies of their hereditary enemies. Inconsistent though it may be, the very same men who will write with enthusiasm of the Switzer's struggle against Hapsburg oppression long

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nationality according to the Church they belonged. As the Albanians did not have such a bond, they were classed according to the religion they belonged to. Albanians were considered to be Greeks if they were Orthodox or they were taken for Turks if they were Muslim. Therefore, this fact gave the Greeks an opportunity to try and pass Orthodox Albanians as Greeks.

<sup>842</sup> The Future of Albania, Reply of the Albanian Delegates to the Greek Claims, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>843</sup> Albanian Committee Publications 1912-1913, DD/DRU 31.

ago will tell you that Albanian mountaineers have no right to freedom and ought to be quite content to-day, in the twentieth century, to put their necks beneath the yoke of Montenegro.<sup>844</sup>

Furthermore, Ryder criticised the British establishment for 'being happy that England was fascinated by Russia', as he put it, and yet did nothing to promote the independence of 'one of the most ancient races in Europe'. Therefore, Ryder continued to make it known that the Albanian Committee was entitled to work towards establishing an Albanian state and preventing the Albanian nation from being sacrificed to the political intrigues of the Powers. 'Albania for some mysterious reason has no claim upon its good offices' added Ryder. He went on to explain the 'mysterious reason' for this:

The truth is, however, that with many freedom is cursed in Albania while it is blessed in Switzerland, because a large portion of Albanian people have the misfortune to belong, by the heritage of centuries, to the Muslem [Muslim] faith. Had these people been of any other religion or of non like so many of our rulers in England to-day, their misfeasance might have been overlooked, but since they are Muhammedans [Muslims] the prejudice of almost every ecclesiastic in the kingdom is against them, while national tradition ignorantly attributes to even the poorest of them the possession of a patriarchal quantity of wives.<sup>845</sup>

Ryder went further in examining the cause of this problem, seeing the religious prejudice which existed in Britain against Jews until the beginning of the twentieth century as a key factor. In this respect, Ryder added that one great objective of the Albanian Committee was to 'mitigate this aversion and to ensure that no man shall be prejudiced by his religion in Albania any more than elsewhere'.<sup>846</sup>

Despite Ryder's letter, to Herbert's dissatisfaction the press, the government and public discourse continued in their prejudice against Muslims. In February 1913, Herbert visited Constantinople and was disappointed to learn at the British Embassy there that the Powers continued to approach the Balkan Question 'very ignorantly' and that the ambassador was

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<sup>844</sup> Albania for Albanians, W.T. M65 - 2360, folios 1-5, 7, May 1913, DD/DRU 31.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid.



not consulted at all by London on the questions of the Ottoman Empire and Albania.<sup>847</sup> When Herbert returned to London he tried to publish his views on this matter, but anti-Turk feeling ran deep in the press and most newspapers would not publish his views. In anger and bitterness, Herbert expressed his views in a poem he wrote:

Intrigues within, intrigues without, no man to trust,  
He [the Turk] feeds street dogs that starve with him; to friends who are his foe  
The Greeks and Bulgars in his lines, he flings a sudden crust  
The Turk who has to go.

The Turk worked in the vineyard, others drunk the wine,  
The Jew who sold him plough shares kept an interest in his plough.  
The Serb and Bulgar waited till King and Priest should sign,  
Till Kings said 'kill, kill now'.

So now the twilight falls upon the twice betrayed,  
The *Daily Mail* tells England and the *Daily News* tells God  
That God and British Statesmen should make the Turk afraid  
Who fight unfed, unshod.<sup>848</sup>

The poem particularly emphasised the power that the media exercised over the public and politics, a fact which Herbert had experienced first-hand. Liberal public opinion and the press were strongly against Herbert's views and continued to have a strong influence over

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<sup>847</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 83.

<sup>848</sup> Fitzherbert, pp. 115-116.

the British position regarding the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans, a fact which was admitted by Edward Grey.<sup>849</sup>

Edward Grey, the British position on Albania and the London Conference of Ambassadors

When the First Balkan War started on 9 October 1912 the British government had no clear idea of how to deal with the situation. The Foreign Office thus hoped that none of the Allied armies would achieve a clear victory. 'The prospect of a Turkish 'débâcle' and the complete victory of the Balkan States makes things more difficult', wrote Grey on 30 October 1912.<sup>850</sup> Contrary to the hopes of the British, the Ottoman army was defeated sooner than anyone could have imagined. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the massacres committed against its Muslim population by the Balkan armies, whose advance the British army had initially supported, caused worries among the British government. Their key consideration was the feelings of the Muslims in India and elsewhere in the Empire about the treatment of their brothers in the Balkans.<sup>851</sup>

By late November the situation was complicated even further when the Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek armies invaded Albania. The advance of the Balkan armies was supported by the British public and even cheered by most politicians. As seen earlier, on 10 November 1912 Asquith expressed support for the Balkan armies in his Guildhall speech. A few days later, Winston Churchill made an even more extreme speech and praised Gladstone for predicting the course of events in the Balkans.<sup>852</sup> Edward Grey believed that Albania was about to spark a European war. Whatever was to happen in the Balkans, the British made it clear during the Conference that they would remain neutral and would not go to war, and certainly not to 'secure an Adriatic seaport for Belgrade.'<sup>853</sup> However the fact that all the Powers had interests in the Balkans meant that, in reality, none truly remained neutral.

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<sup>849</sup> Bejtullah Destani and Robert Elsie, eds., *The London Conference and the Albanian Question 1912-1914 – The Dispatches of Sir Edward Grey* (London: Centre for Albanian Studies, 2016), p. 21.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid.

<sup>851</sup> Heller, p. 72.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

<sup>853</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 354.

The Conference of London, or the Conference of Ambassadors as it is known in Albania, started on 17 December 1912. In seeking a post-war settlement the Conference was 'not of justice but of force,' wrote Grey in his diary, adding that 'the point of friction and danger was Albania'.<sup>854</sup> Most historians of the Balkan Wars, including Ernst Helmreich and Christopher Clark, have maintained that during the Conference the only Powers that supported the creation of Albania based on ethnic principles were Austria-Hungary and to some extent Italy. However, the German ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, wrote in his memoirs that Germany also supported Albania in order to fall in line with the position prescribed by Vienna.<sup>855</sup> As a result, Germany took the side of Austria-Hungary and Italy on the problem of Shkodra, the Serbian port on the Adriatic and on the delimitation of the frontiers.

Despite German rhetorical support, it was only Austria-Hungary which gave signs of being prepared to go to war over Albania. Austria-Hungary also pushed for the new state to be as large as possible, a position Russia vehemently opposed. Under the banner of 'Albania for Albanians', Vienna was carrying out its policy of supporting Albanian nationalism and the creation of an Albanian state. The Austro-Hungarian ambassador managed to impose his proposal that Albania should border Greece in the south while bordering Montenegro in the north. This ended the question of Serbian expansion to the Albanian Adriatic coast but introduced many border problems in the north-east and east of Albania.<sup>856</sup>

The British government was not concerned with the ethnographic composition of independent Albania, its primary concern being to protect its direct interests by maintaining the balance of power in the Adriatic and Mediterranean seas. Since Albania held a strategic location in this respect, it became a matter of concern for the British. The main aim of the British government was to ensure that the territories of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, after their eventual dissolution, would not fall under Russian rule. Therefore, the British were ready to support the creation of an independent Albania or enlargements of existing Balkan states if this would help to achieve their objective, and if not the principle of compromise would be applied.<sup>857</sup> During the London Conference the

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<sup>854</sup> Grey, pp. 263-264.

<sup>855</sup> Prince Lichnowsky, *My Mission to London 1912-1914* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), p. 10.

<sup>856</sup> Helmreich, p. 252.

<sup>857</sup> Guy, pp. 245-6.

British government declared that this policy was pursued in line with the principle of neutrality.

In his public appearances and later in his memoirs, Grey was keen to emphasise that he had not taken sides in negotiations during the Conference because the settlement 'did not touch British interest'.<sup>858</sup> While it is true that Albania was not within the scope of direct British interests, Grey was not as neutral as he publicly declared. Elaborating on Grey's "neutrality", Lichnowsky gave a conflicting account when he wrote that Grey 'supported our group in order not to give a pretext like the one a dead Archduke was to furnish later on'.<sup>859</sup>

At the beginning of the Balkan Wars, Grey was among the first European statesmen to recognise the need for Albania to become autonomous. Although this recognition was the result of strategic not ideological aims, it was nonetheless useful for the Albanian national cause and led Herbert to show respect and sympathy for Grey. On 28 October 1912 Grey told Edward Goschen, the British ambassador to Germany, that 'Albania could hardly be absorbed', because 'Albanians both Christian and Moslem would combine against the Serbs'.<sup>860</sup> Another letter Grey sent to Francis Bertie, the British ambassador to France, emphasised that British foreign policy would not go against British public opinion. This was fundamental to his policies, and his respecting for Liberal public opinion led to his support of the Balkan Allied armies. Speaking on this matter, Grey laid out the framework that he was to follow during the Conference:

Public opinion here will be dead against turning the Balkan States out of what they may show their ability to conquer by their own forces. If Russia and Austria do agree upon a settlement, public opinion here will not push its own views and force the Government to assert them. But if Austria were to attack the Balkan States, and Russia said "Hands off", it would be impossible for a British Government, even if it desired, to side diplomatically with Austria against Russia.

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<sup>858</sup> Grey, 261.

<sup>859</sup> Lichnowsky, p. 11.

<sup>860</sup> Grey to Goschen, 28 October 1912, NA, FO, 45926/33672/12, Nr. 44.

I propose to work for agreement between Russia and Austria, but it will have to be with the limitation that Austria is reasonable.<sup>861</sup>

Grey also expressed the “neutral position” of the British government to the Serbian *Chargé d’Affaires*, who informed Grey that Serbia was claiming the *Vilayet* of Kosovo, the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar, part of the *Vilayet* of Shkodra, and the ports of Durrës and Shën Gjin. Grey repeated that it was public opinion which would not allow the British government to ‘deprive the victors of the fruits of their victories’.<sup>862</sup> In doing so Grey indicated that the British government would not object totally to Serbian claims on Albania. However, Grey did not give in entirely to public opinion and acted between the pressure of this and the strategic interest of the British government. In taking this position Grey had partly satisfied Albanian nationalism, but also encouraged Serbian ambitions to continue their military advance and attempts to occupy as much Albanian land as possible.<sup>863</sup>

On 7 April 1913 Edward Grey made a statement about Albania in the House of Commons, claiming that the British government had maintained its neutrality. He told the House that an agreement, which was a compromise between the Powers, had been reached about the north-east borders of Albania. It was decided that most of the *Vilayet* of Kosovo would not be included in Albania but rather divided between Serbia and Montenegro. Grey also said that this agreement was essential for Europe as it was ‘accomplished only just in time to preserve the peace between the Great Powers’.<sup>864</sup> Preserving the peace thus proved more important than applying the principle of nationality in the case of Albania.

The Albanian Committee had hoped for a better decision. However, in Albania the situation was worsened as Montenegrin and Serbian forces ignored the decision of the Conference and continued to attack Shkodra.<sup>865</sup>

Shkodra was eventually handed to the Montenegrins by Esat Pasha but the London Conference, just before the start of the Second Balkan War, decided to return the city to Albania. On this occasion Herbert told the House of Commons that Shkodra was to remain within the borders of Albania ‘thanks to great extent to England’. Yet Herbert also added

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<sup>861</sup> Destani and Elsie, *The London Conference*, p. 21.

<sup>862</sup> Grey to Paget, 6 November 1912, NA, FO, 47559/42842/12, Nr. 44.

<sup>863</sup> Hinsley, p. 59.

<sup>864</sup> Pearson, p. 40.

<sup>865</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

that by and large the Conference had decided to give to Albania only 'rocks and gorges and mountain torrents' and stripped it of 'rivers and fertile plains'. Speaking about the territory that remained outside Albania, Herbert told the House:

Towns that are most Albanian and that she needs - like Ipek [Peja], like Dibra, which stands in the same relationship to Albania as Yorkshire does to England; or Prizren with its fertile plain and beautiful cypresses - have been taken from her.<sup>866</sup>

Herbert was supported in his view by Walter Guinness, a conservative MP and Committee member, who criticised the "neutrality" of the British government which he saw as an erroneous approach towards Albania. Since the war was not over, Guinness suggested that the British and other governments in Europe should adopt a different approach, applying the principle of 'Balkans for the Balkan people' in Albania and fully disclosing and condemning atrocities committed against the Albanians.<sup>867</sup>

Herbert was also supported by several other MPs, including John Annan Bryce, a Liberal MP, but the number of MPs who supported Montenegro and Serbia was far greater. Though none objected to the Albanian right to statehood, they favoured the decisions taken thus far by the Conference and denied the number of Albanian refugees and atrocities which were committed by Allied armies.<sup>868</sup>

Although the decision of the Conference was regarded as unfavourable by the Committee and Albanians, Herbert saw the role of the British government and Grey as positive for Albania. It is likely that Herbert knew the situation would have been much worse for Albania without Grey's engagement in the Conference. The difficult situation in Albania was far from over and Herbert, as a cautious politician, had no intention of jeopardising his relationship with Grey and closing the door to the British government. At this stage it could be suggested that the Albanian Committee, and particularly Herbert, needed a good relationship with the British government as he might have had pretensions to the Albanian throne. Another reason Herbert needed Grey's support was his and the Committee's humanitarian engagement with Albania. Herbert led several relief missions to help the

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<sup>866</sup> Aubrey Herbert's Speeches, Parliamentary Debates: Albania and Montenegro, 8 May 1913, DD/DRU 41.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid. pp. 2305-2310.

<sup>868</sup> Ibid.

refugees who had flooded Albania, escaping persecution from the lands which were given to Montenegro, Serbia and Greece. Largely thanks to the work of Herbert, these humanitarian activities were supported by Grey and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George.<sup>869</sup> Herbert continued his fundraising through different events organised by the Committee and other British humanitarian organisations, among the donors to which there were royal family members. Herbert's humanitarian activity did not go unnoticed in Albania. Filip Noga, a minister in Ismail Qemali's government, sent a telegram to thank Herbert and the Albanian Committee and also praised the British government for their humanitarian support.<sup>870</sup>

Grey was convinced that the Conference had managed to avoid the worst: endangering the peace of Europe. He believed that 'the things that had threatened the relations between the Great Powers in 1912-13' had been successfully avoided.<sup>871</sup> However, the decision of the London Conference was met with fierce criticism in the British Parliament and the press by Herbert and other members of the Albanian Committee. During the Conference, as Clark notes, Grey had adopted 'a latent pro-Serbian policy'. Clark maintains that Grey favoured 'Belgrade's claims over those of the new Albanian state, not because he supported the Great Serbian cause as such', but because he regarded Serbia as an important factor for the 'durability of [the] Entente'.<sup>872</sup> As a result of Grey's "neutrality", Clark added that over half of Albanian territory and half of the population remained outside the newly created Kingdom and most of those who fell under Serb rule 'suffered persecution, deportation, mistreatment and massacres'.<sup>873</sup>

Needless to say, Grey's hopes for keeping Europe out of a wide armed conflict were not fulfilled. The First World War began less than a year after the Conference of London had ended. It could be concluded that the main reason that peace did not last long after the Balkan settlement was that Serbia was not satisfied with the extent of its territorial expansion and its lack of access to the Albanian coast. The London Conference and British neutrality left Serbia with a desire for further expansion in the shape of Bosnia and

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<sup>869</sup> Lloyd to Herbert, 16 June 1913, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>870</sup> Appeal in Support of a Fund to Relieve the Destitute and Starving in and Around Scutari, 8 July 1913, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>871</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 98.

<sup>872</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 357.

<sup>873</sup> Ibid.

Herzegovina. Grey's aim during the Conference was to prevent the Powers from falling into two camps. R. W. Seton-Watson argued that if Grey had revived the Conference of Ambassadors in 1914 the great catastrophe would have been averted.<sup>874</sup>

However, in his memoirs, Herbert did not criticise the British press either:

The Albanian Committee did not have to complain of the way in which it was treated by the Government or the Press. Those pre-War days were Christian, and the howling cannibals of 1919 had not yet been loosed upon the suffering world. [...] In spite of the intrigues of the Great Powers, the world was not too bad a place, and the Albanians, in England at any rate, received a fair hearing through the Albanian Committee, which tried to be, if not impartial, as moderate as possible. Very little was known about Albania. The general impression was that the Albanians were another branch of the Armenian family, and indeed, as far as massacres were concerned, this was most understandable, for the unarmed, pastoral Albanians of the South were massacred by the Greeks in 1913, while the Albanians of the North-West received the same treatment at the hands of the Serbs.<sup>875</sup>

Keeping in mind this situation, Herbert criticised the Powers but congratulated Grey for the part he played in the creation of the Albanian state. In this regard Herbert said that 'if Lord Byron and Garibaldi could have looked down upon this struggle', they would have helped Edward Grey. Herbert saw the efforts of the Powers in building an Albanian state as akin to 'starting a young man on his career with his legs amputated and his arms truncated, and the same time you pick his pockets'.<sup>876</sup> However, British officials went on to play an important and constructive role within the International Commission of Control, British Consulate and the international troops that occupied Shkodra.

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<sup>874</sup> Robert William Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe 1789-1914 – A Survey of Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 641.

<sup>875</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. 214.

<sup>876</sup> Aubrey Herbert's Speech, House of Commons, War in the Balkans, 12 August 1913, 2315 – 2318, DD/DRU 41.



## The Quest for a Monarch of Albania

The London Conference of Ambassadors concluded its work on 11 August 1913. The Powers agreed to establish the International Commission of Control which would oversee the creation of the new Albanian state. The work of the Commission was to decide an outline of the borders between Albania and Greece. The Conference issued a final decision by which Albania was recognised as an independent, sovereign, neutral and hereditary principality. A monarch was to be designated by the Powers and all ties between Albania and the Porte were to be cut off. The Powers would organise a civil administration, police and military forces under the authority of the International Commission of Control with a mandate of ten years.<sup>877</sup>

When the Conference decided that Albania was to become a kingdom, many royal names from Europe were mentioned as potential candidates. Many Albanian leaders were in favour of a British sovereign. Herbert had become a hero in Albania with his humanitarian work and his political contribution to the establishment of the Albanian state was seen as second to none. Thus Ismail Bey Qemali, on behalf of the Provisional Government, offered the Albanian throne to Herbert. Herbert did not respond to the offer immediately but did not refuse it completely since he could not decide to take the offer of the crown without the agreement and support of the British government.<sup>878</sup> He therefore put the proposal to Edward Grey, whom he met several times to discuss this matter. However, Grey and Prime Minister Asquith, although a close family friend, did not support Herbert's candidacy for King of Albania. The neutrality of the British government meant that none of its nationals should acquire such a high position, since appointing a British national as King of Albania meant that Great Britain would be expected to intervene in support if a crisis were to occur in the future.<sup>879</sup> The British government had no such plans to support the new Kingdom.

Another problem that Herbert saw in the offer was the Albanians themselves. From experience he knew that the Ottoman Empire had never managed to collect taxes from Albania and he believed that the Albanians were likely to continue with their resistance to such policies. Even if the Albanians were to pay taxes, they could not contribute much with

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<sup>877</sup> See the full text of the London Conference on the Independence of Albania in Destani and Elsie, *The London Conference*, pp. 349-350.

<sup>878</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, pp. 93 & 98.

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94.

a weak economy and a country destroyed during the war. Had Herbert been the eldest of Carnarvon's sons, he would have inherited the title of Earl and the money attached to such a position, which would probably have led him to accept the offer even without the support of the British government. 'If I had fifty thousand a year, I think I should take Albania', wrote Herbert to his brother, adding that there was 'quite a decent chance of making something of it, if it is properly treated'.<sup>880</sup>

Another British personality the Albanians considered for their throne was Colonel George Phillips (1863-1921), who was appointed President of the International Administration of Shkodra in 1913-14 and Head of the British Military Mission to Albania. In replacing Admiral Burney in Shkodra, Phillips became very important for the Albanians. Explaining this relationship Herbert wrote that Phillips had 'fallen completely under the spell of Albania and loves the people, with whom he gets on extremely well'.<sup>881</sup> Phillips' success as governor of Shkodra was remarkable, his influence extending beyond the assigned perimeter of Shkodra and his authority reaching the most remote parts of Albania in the north. Where the Ottomans, Serbs and Montenegrins had not succeeded with their policies and troops, Phillips did so single-handedly and restored authority among the warring Albanian highlanders.<sup>882</sup>

Herbert established direct contact with Phillips for political reasons and humanitarian purposes. The humanitarian relief – both money and goods – would be sent to Phillips by the Albanian Committee to be distributed around Shkodra. Phillips also established contact with Albanian leaders in Kosovo and asked for their help in dealing with a variety of problems, not least the fact that the town had already received 16,000 refugees who were starving and had no possibility of housing or feeding them. Phillips, through Herbert, passed this information to Grey and asked for more humanitarian support.<sup>883</sup>

Among the major tasks of the international presence in Shkodra was to improve the infrastructure of the town and the region now they had returned to normal life. For this reason the population respected Phillips, who also made efforts to organise cooperation

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<sup>880</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>881</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. 222.

<sup>882</sup> Brigadier General Phillips, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Dec 1921 <<http://0-search.proquest.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/docview/476539549?pq-origsite=summon>> [accessed 30 October 2016].

<sup>883</sup> Phillips to Herbert, 10 November 1913, DD/DRU 47.

between local authorities, elders and town councils and tried to rebuild local self-government.<sup>884</sup> He also managed to create a harmonious relationship between the five military contingents of the International Force in Shkodra.<sup>885</sup>

Phillips enlarged his administrative and humanitarian activities and requested from London more money and officers to assist him.<sup>886</sup> By March 1914, Phillips acquired more power from the International Commission and gained more respect from the Albanians. Explaining Phillips' work, Lamb wrote to Grey:

Phillips, besides being Civil Governor of the town, is also virtually responsible for the whole of Northern Albania, for, although his authority is nominally limited to the ten kilometres zone, he is really referred to and consulted by the tribal chiefs of all the mountains and Alessio [Lezha] and Medua [Shën Gjin].<sup>887</sup>

Phillips' respect among the Albanians grew further when, on 19 March 1914, he officially hoisted the Albanian flag on the citadel of Shkodra in the presence of thousands of Albanians, both Muslim and Christian, alongside their political and religious leaders.<sup>888</sup> All parties had jointly celebrated the event as a way of forging their national feelings and enjoying the symbolic nature of their new state. It is likely this was indeed the intention of Colonel Phillips. Many Albanians increasingly saw Phillips as a just and able man who could solve their problems and his good reputation reached all parts of Albania. Therefore, a deputation of Albanian notables asked Phillips if he could assume the Crown of Albania. Phillips, knowing that he would lack the support of his government, preferred to continue his career with the British Army and refused the offer.<sup>889</sup>

Edith Durham has noted another option explored by the Albanians in order to find a Briton for their king. Durham wrote in *Contemporary Review* that Albanian leaders had explored

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<sup>884</sup> Erwin A. Schmidl, 'The International Operation in Albania, 1913–14', *The International Peacekeeping*, 6. 3 (1999), pp. 1-10 (p. 4) <<http://0-www.tandfonline.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1080/13533319908413782>> [accessed 19 October 2015].

<sup>885</sup> The International Force numbered 1,800 soldiers. The strongest contingents came from Austria-Hungary at 581 soldiers and Italy at 524. The British had 382 soldiers, the French 203, while the Germans sent 112 marines.

<sup>886</sup> Phillips to War Office, 18 January 1914, NA, FO, 371/1892.

<sup>887</sup> Lamb to Grey, 18 April 1914, NA, FO, 421/293, Nr. 85

<sup>888</sup> Ibid.

<sup>889</sup> Ethem Çeku and Bejtullah Destani, *Gjeneral Phillips: Komiteti 'Mbrojtja Kombëtare e Kosovës' – Dokumente historike nga arkivat britanike 1913-1921* (Tirane: Instituti i Çështjeve Kombëtare & Centre for Albanian Studies, 2015), p. 22.

the possibility of appointing Prince Arthur of Connaught (1850-1942), the third son of Queen Victoria, as King of Albania, though nothing came of this initiative.<sup>890</sup>

Meanwhile, the Powers' were also looking for a suitable monarch for Albania. Herbert, being familiar with the situation in Albania and the Power's attitude towards it, wrote to his younger brother, Mervyn:

I don't think they [the Albanians] are likely to get a good Prince. Any prince would be an ass to take it if he knew the difficulties and more of an ass if he didn't.<sup>891</sup>

Herbert's prediction was almost entirely true. Until October 1913 the Powers could not agree on an Albanian sovereign. The British did not want to play any part in this project but agreed that the Austro-Hungarians should take the initiative of recruiting a monarch. Vienna would not accept Italian or French candidates, nor a British prince or aristocrat. The Italians, who wanted to gain influence in Albania, preferred a Protestant king. There were signs that the Russians would object to a Catholic prince and favoured a Muslim. Muslim members of the Albanian Committee, such as Amir Ali, head of the All Indian Muslim League and Dusé Mohamed Ali, a playwright, historian and journalist who also became known for his African nationalism, advocated for a Muslim monarch. They were in favour of the candidacy of Prince Ahmad Fuad of the Albanian Khedive dynasty of Egypt.<sup>892</sup> However, most of the Albanian leaders rejected Muslim, Catholic or Orthodox candidates because each of these choices would have led to some part of the population being alienated. In light of these limitations and the fact that their desire for a British monarch could not be fulfilled, the only option seemed to be a Protestant king.<sup>893</sup>

By late October 1913, the Powers had narrowed their choice to one candidate called William Fredrick Henry of Wied (1872-1945). He came from minor German royalty, was a Protestant by religion and connected with the Romanian, Dutch and Prussian royal families. William, later to become Prince Wied of Albania, was acceptable to all Powers. He was also acceptable to the Albanians, although they were not asked their opinion and played no role

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<sup>890</sup> Destani, *M. Edith Durham*, p. 88.

<sup>891</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 93.

<sup>892</sup> Ian Duffield, 'Dusé Mohamed Ali and the development of Pan-Africanism 1866-1945', Vol. II, *Edinburgh University* (1971), pp. 416-822 (p. 432) <<https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/7323?show=full>> [accessed 4 March 2016].

<sup>893</sup> Duncan Heaton-Armstrong, *The Six Month Kingdom – Albania 1914* (London: I. B. Tauris & Centre for Albanian Studies, 2005), pp. xi-xiii.

in the selection process. William initially hesitated in accepting the offer, but behind the scenes his wife Sophie and his aunt Queen Elisabeth of Romania continuously strove to persuade him, while the Austro-Hungarian authorities insisted he accept the offer. In November the Powers announced that William Fredrick Henry of Wied was selected to be the future sovereign of Albania. During the selection process the German government had not shown any interest at all in Wied, while the Austro-Hungarian Emperor was understood to be 'hostile to the whole adventure'. Prince Wied, supported by his uncle King Carol of Romania, negotiated with the Powers a loan of 10 million francs but no military force was assigned to him. Finally, on 7 February 1914, Prince Wied wrote to the Powers to state that he would accept the throne of Albania.<sup>894</sup>

Before leaving for Albania Prince Wied, on his tour of visiting the capitals of the Powers, went to London on 18 February and lunched at Buckingham Palace with the royal family. The British government and the Foreign Office did not show much interest in him. While in London, the Prince met Herbert and discussed the situation in Albania and leading Albanian personalities. The Prince thanked Herbert and the Albanian Committee for its work on behalf of Albania and in return Herbert and the Committee expressed hope that Prince Wied would succeed in restoring peace and prosperity in Albania.<sup>895</sup>

When Prince Wied arrived in Albania on 9 March 1914 Harry Lamb was impressed by him but wrote that his courtiers and advisers, both European and local Albanian, were not of much use to him. Prince Wied's arrival in Albania was greeted with great enthusiasm by Albanians. A nationalist newspaper *Perlindja e Shqipëniës* (Albania's Rebirth), that supported the Albanian Provisional Government, used its front-page article to call Wied *Mbret i Shqipëtarëvet* (King of the Albanians) and published a poem titled *Salve Caesar*. The article went on to say that the dream of the Albanians was coming true and Wied's picture was published alongside Skanderbeg's portrait.<sup>896</sup>

Despite this initial enthusiasm the Albanians would soon become disappointed with their *Mbret* who was only a minor royal, had no army, little money and little knowledge on the country or his subjects. He arrived in Albania eight months after the decision had been

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<sup>894</sup> Ibid.

<sup>895</sup> Destani and Tomes, *Albania's Greatest Friend*, p. 168.

<sup>896</sup> Rroftë Wilhelmi I – Mbreti i Shqipëtarëvet, *Perlindja e Shqipëniës*, Vjet' i II, 22/27 Mars 1914, p. 1.

taken by the London Conference and some political forces had already started to undermine his power. One of the first letters that Wied sent to Herbert from Albania revealed his lack of knowledge about the country. 'We feel almost like children learning geography and all sorts of things one has not learnt for centuries'.<sup>897</sup>

This lack of knowledge would result in mistakes. On 18 March 1914 Prince Wied formed his new government, which consisted of powerful landlords and some other important personalities. He appointed Hasan Prishtina as a minister, the only politician to come from the ranks of the nationalists. The vast majority of other ministers and government functionaries were either born abroad or had lived there for a long time but had no real connection to or feelings for Albania. Wied's private secretary, Duncan Heaton-Armstrong, wrote that the first meeting of the government was held in the Turkish language because some of the ministers could not even speak Albanian. For most of them Turkish was the most appropriate language because they had studied it or lived in Constantinople or elsewhere working as functionaries of the Ottoman Empire. This act enraged nationalists who were excluded from the government. The population did not accept such a government with its members who were regarded as 'foreigners.'<sup>898</sup> Wied's governance quickly resembled Abdul Hamid's failed strategy of ruling in Albania since Wied, like Abdul Hamid, relied heavily on Albanian *pashas* and *beys*, chief among who was Esat Pasha who was chosen as Minister of Internal Affairs.

The Powers, including Britain, showed no serious intention of supporting the new principality of Albania. The Italians, through Esat Pasha, were active in undermining Wied's rule. As the unity of the Powers disintegrated with the onset of war, so did Wied's power and popularity. Lamb and Phillips made numerous appeals for help to the British government, but there was no positive response from London.<sup>899</sup>

Wied's rapidly deteriorating situation meant more international troops in Albania were required because, as Lamb explained, the British government had a 'responsibility to the Prince'.<sup>900</sup> Edward Grey refused Lamb's request.<sup>901</sup> The lack of will to help Albania was also

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<sup>897</sup> Armstrong, p. XV.

<sup>898</sup> Ibid, pp. 26-27.

<sup>899</sup> Guy, p. 83.

<sup>900</sup> Lamb to Grey, 19 May 1914, NA, FO, 170/802, Nr. 104; Lamb to Grey 4 June 1914, NA, FO, 170/802, Nr. 167.

<sup>901</sup> Grey to Lamb, 18 June 1914, NA, FO, 170/802, Nr. 185.

seen on numerous other occasions, including when Phillips supported the initiative of the Powers' representatives in Shkodra on the training of an Albanian force. He proposed more support from the British government, but Grey warned that no force should be established if there was no money to pay the soldiers.<sup>902</sup>

This lack of money was a serious problem for Albania and one which Grey had addressed a few months earlier. In January 1914 the Italian ambassador to London had asked Grey if the British government would join the initiative in guaranteeing a loan for Albania. Grey said that the government had first to authorise such an initiative which required the consent of Parliament. This process took a long time and the money was nowhere to be seen. In addition, Grey told the Italian diplomat:

I could not feel quite the same attachment to Albania as some other Powers did; indeed, more than once we had all but parted from Albania.<sup>903</sup>

Grey was at least sincere in admitting this failure, but he also made it clear that his interest was only in the creation of the Albanian state and not its development. It is this creation of the Albanian state and his sincerity that were the things Herbert appreciated about Grey. In March 1914 the British government finally contributed £5000 to the cause, a quota that other Powers did not follow because they preferred to give a loan through a bank. In an article published in *The Morning Post*, Herbert argued that such a loan was a political act by the Powers which, as a consequence, would produce political requests and complications.<sup>904</sup>

#### Albania: A Failed Project

The British military staff, headed initially by Admiral Burney and later by Colonel Phillips, as well as the diplomatic staff in Albania, played an important and constructive role in the state building process of the new country. From their despatches it can be seen that they were committed to making Albania a successful project but their centre in London did not endorse the advice they passed on. Admiral Burney was largely unsuccessful in his difficult

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<sup>902</sup> Grey to Rod, 24 June 1914, NA, FO, 170/802, Nr, 2897/14.

<sup>903</sup> Foreign Office, 7 January 1914, NA, FO, 170/802, Nr. 5.

<sup>904</sup> Aubrey Herbert, 'Albanian Independence', *Morning Post*, 13 March 1914: DD/DRU 4/6, part 1.

task because in Britain 'people knew very little about the Albanian question and were chary of coming to decisions on a very thorny subject'.<sup>905</sup> In Shkodra, the Admiral had often asked his headquarters and the British government for more political and military support. He also proposed that more organisations and personalities from Britain such as the Lord Mayor of London should use their influence to obtain more money for Albania.<sup>906</sup>

In order to improve the position of the Provisional Government and the economy of Albania, Herbert made efforts to establish a regular line between British and Albanian sea ports which would have established trade relations with Britain. Herbert wrote to his friend Lloyd George, asking him and his office to study this matter and come up with a proposal. Trade experts came up with the conclusion that none of the British lines were interested in sailing to Albania and that Albanian goods were instead destined for Austrian and German markets.<sup>907</sup>

However, while other Powers and Albania's neighbours all entered into some kind of agreement with Esat Pasha only the British never entertained his ambitions. For many Albanians, supporting Esat Pasha was tantamount to being against their Provisional Government, Wied's administration and the new-born state. However, British diplomats in Albania, mainly Phillips and Lamb supported the Provisional Government, later Prince Wied, and kept Esat Pasha at a distance.<sup>908</sup> This was a good reason for Albanian nationalists to see Britain with more sympathy. When Esat Pasha was prepared to become a governor of Shkodra, it was Phillips and Lamb who blocked Esat's efforts to assume such an important position.<sup>909</sup> Phillips and Lamb also warned the Foreign Office that Esat Pasha, after being blocked from gaining the position of governor of Shkodra, was allowed to get too near Prince Wied and gain too much power.<sup>910</sup>

Lamb and Phillips undertook several initiatives for normalising the difficult situation and improving the position of the Albanian provisional government and later Prince Wied's rule. They both kept asking the British government for further support but there was a limit

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<sup>905</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, p. 218.

<sup>906</sup> Burney to Admiralty, 4 August 1913, NA, FO, 371/1893, Nr. 1; Burney to Admiralty, 10 August 1913, Nr. 1, Enclosure 1.

<sup>907</sup> Jonas to George, 17 November 1913, DD/DRU 47.

<sup>908</sup> Lamb to Grey, 11 April 1914, NA, FO, 371/1892, Nr. 78.

<sup>909</sup> Çeku and Destani, *Gjenerali Phillips*, p. 106.

<sup>910</sup> Lamb to Grey, 11 April 1914, NA, FO, 421/293, Nr. 78.



which was put by Grey. Lamb had noted that the Albanian government was in great need of specialised people to be employed in the administration and asked Grey to intervene to the Ottoman government for an agreement which would have enabled them to come and join the government in Vlora. Grey refused to undertake such a task.<sup>911</sup> When Phillips asked for more authority in using his troops, Grey warned that British troops should not be employed in operations against Montenegro or Serbia without authority from London.<sup>912</sup>

The refusal of the British government for greater engagement in Albania marked a change in relations between Herbert and Grey. Since the arrival of Prince Wied, Herbert believed that Grey was ignoring the difficulties that the Greek government created in south Albania. Contrary to the decisions of the London Conference, the Greek government continued to keep its troops in Albanian territory. After some pressure the Greek government announced that the troops were withdrawn but reports that Lamb sent from Albania showed that this was not entirely true. Even if the Greek army withdrew, they left behind bands of irregular forces to create trouble. Lamb reported that during 1914 both Christian and Muslim Albanians were 'subjected to persecution as they were during 1913'. On many occasions the Serbian and more often the Greek army and irregulars attacked the Albanian Gendarmerie.<sup>913</sup> Lamb also reported that Greek officials exercised violence, particularly against the Albanian Muslim landowners of Çamëria.<sup>914</sup>

Francis Elliot, the British ambassador to Greece, painted a different picture of these events. He mainly echoed the Greek view and this meant that the Foreign Office was receiving conflicting reports about the situation in south Albania and the Albanian parts that were awarded to Greece. On 17 February 1914 the situation worsened when a group of Greeks in Gjirokastra, under the leadership of Christakis Zographos, announced the formation of the 'Provisional Government of Autonomous Epirus', a region that consisted of southern Albania. Zographos was the Foreign Minister of Greece in 1909, a post to which he would return in 1915.<sup>915</sup> Zographos sent a letter to Elliot to explain his position to the British

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<sup>911</sup> Lamb to Grey 10 February 1914, NA, FO, 421/293, Nr. 35.

<sup>912</sup> Grey to Lamb, 20 April 1914, NA, FO, 421/293, Nr. 48.

<sup>913</sup> Lamb to Grey, 13 January 1914, NA, FO, 371/1887, Nr. 352; Lamb to Grey, 21 January 1914, NA, FO 371/1887, Nr. 19; Lamb to Grey, 2 February 1914, FO 371/1887, Nr. 29.

<sup>914</sup> Lamb to Grey, 21 February 1914, NA, FO, 371/1887, Nr. 40.

<sup>915</sup> Guy, p. 74.

government. The letter, accompanied by Elliot's report of much sympathy for Zographos, was sent to the Foreign Office.<sup>916</sup>

Lamb sent a different report from Albania. He considered that Zographos was acting against the sovereignty of Albania with the knowledge and 'connivance of the Greek authorities'. Lamb also added that all these activities were against the decisions of the London Conference and against the authority of the International Commission and as such he proposed to arrest Zographos and his supporters.<sup>917</sup>

The complication of the situation and Greek atrocities in southern Albania led Edward Grey to make a statement in the House of Commons during parliamentary questions:

Northern Epirus is, by international agreement, to form part of the new State of Albania; Greek authority, as far as it exists in that region, is based on military occupation of recent date, and will shortly be terminated by the withdrawal of the Greek forces there.<sup>918</sup>

This was an encouraging answer but the problem still remained acute as the Greek government was not withdrawing its forces and continued to commit atrocities against Albanians. As a result, Grey denied the involvement of the Greek government and accused Greek irregular forces. Using this situation, Herbert tried to initiate changes in the British policy. On March 1914 he exposed the problem that he thought that British policy was facing in the Mediterranean and the Balkans. He also criticised the government's policy and the press for not adopting a friendlier approach towards Balkan Muslims and for letting Serbia take Albanian land and Greece take Salonika where the vast majority of the inhabitants were Jews and Muslims and not Greeks or Christians. He believed that this attitude was a result of a wrong established policy which produced weaknesses for British power and influence in the Mediterranean. Hence, Herbert, supported by a good number of MPs, suggested that the British government should be present in the Mediterranean with a strong fleet. 'You cannot have a strong policy unless you have a strong Fleet', Herbert told the House and added:

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<sup>916</sup> Elliot to Grey, 20 February 1914, NA, FO, 371/1887, Nr. 44.

<sup>917</sup> Lamb to Grey, 28 February 1914, NA, FO, 371/1887, Nr.41.

<sup>918</sup> Albania, Parliamentary Questions, 4 March 1914, NA, FO, 371/1887, Nr. 10016.

We mean the Fleet to protect our Empire, and in all circumstances to guarantee the food supply of the people of these islands. The Mediterranean is the wedding of our Imperial and our foreign interests. It is the marriage ring of the Empire. It is as important to us as Adriatic was to Venice, for it is by the Mediterranean that we feed London and that we hold India.<sup>919</sup>

There is no doubt that Albania would have benefited from the presence of a British fleet in the Mediterranean which could reach the Adriatic. That was one more reason why Herbert made this suggestion which would result in a change of British policy. Grey admitted that some of the problems which were occurring within the territory of the Ottoman Empire were the result of the absence of a British fleet in the region. Therefore, Grey maintained that because of the absence of a British force, the Sultan in the past had adopted a violent approach towards these parts of his empire.<sup>920</sup> Although this caused anger, anxiety and 'loud indignation of British public opinion', and despite Herbert's suggestion, Grey had no intention of changing the existing policy.<sup>921</sup>

By the end of June 1914 Herbert proposed in the House of Commons to send a British consul to south Albania. Grey maintained that the Greek government was no party to the atrocities but admitted that Athens faced difficulties in exercising control. As a matter of fact, this was not true as numerous reports that Grey received from his consuls showed clearly the direct involvement of the Greek government. Herbert insisted on more active and practical involvement of the British government in Albania. After a fierce debate, Grey came to the point that he had been avoiding for months and told Herbert and the House that he was not going to send a British Consul to south Albania or Epirus. Grey concluded that the British government had 'taken the line that we are not prepared to send British troops into Albania'.<sup>922</sup> To the dissatisfaction of Herbert, Grey explained the meaning and effect that British neutrality or non-involvement had in Albania:

On the other hand, if you are not prepared to send troops of your own to use force, you must, of course, stand aside when things are very bad and other Powers take a different view, and you must not object to the measures they

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<sup>919</sup> Aubrey Herbert's Speech: Mediterranean Strategic Position, 18 March 1914, pp. 2149-54, DD/DRU 41.

<sup>920</sup> Grey, p. 258.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

<sup>922</sup> Aubrey Herbert Speeches, Parliamentary Debates, 29 June 1914, pp. 97-120, DD/DRU 43.

propose to take. I can say no more about it [...] It is very unsatisfactory, but we cannot find a remedy in the use of force. The most I can say is we are willing that, while we are not prepared to do things ourselves, we are not going to obstruct the steps other people will take for themselves.<sup>923</sup>

Prince Wied had hoped that the Powers would send an international force to his assistance so Grey's refusal to send troops to Albania was not good news. However, Wied was soon to be further disappointed when Grey suggested that the Prince should apply to Austria-Hungary and Italy for support.<sup>924</sup>

Grey, explaining his position, revealed that the Powers were nowhere near to fulfilling their duties and the state building process in Albania was going from bad to worse. Predicting the collapse of international involvement, Lamb decided to remind Grey that the British government had obligations towards Albania. Lamb stated that Grey, in his despatches, had written that the Conference of Ambassadors had established Albania in order to protect this country from being partitioned by the neighbouring countries and from the interference of Austria-Hungary and Italy.<sup>925</sup>

Lamb maintained that the Powers were not giving a chance to the Albanian Government to organise its administration and spread its authority throughout the entire territory and lacked the will to help maintain the authority of Prince Wied. Lamb believed that Albania, 'in the opinion of all who reason objectively', was being made a source of conflict. Therefore, he suggested that the Powers and Britain should adopt a just policy which would be in interest of Albania and Europe in order to obviate the risk of a bigger crisis. Lamb criticised the existing policy of the Powers which consisted of allowing Austria-Hungary and Italy to reach an understanding regarding the Albanian coast and because of this understanding the Balkan states were to be compensated with territory in the interior part of Albania.<sup>926</sup>

Following the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, the Powers showed almost no interest in Albania. Albania took a

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<sup>923</sup> Ibid.

<sup>924</sup> Armstrong, p. 134.

<sup>925</sup> Lamb to Grey, 21 June 1914, NA, FO, 421/293, Nr. 138.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid.

secondary place in the European crisis which led to the outbreak of the World War I in August of that year. The international involvement of the Powers in Albania faded away. The international contingent, commanded by Colonel Phillips, withdrew from Shkodra in early August.<sup>927</sup>

After Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August and on Austria-Hungary on 12 August, Harry Lamb left Albania on Foreign Office orders on 17 August. Prince Wied, who was cut off from the Powers' financial and military support, left on 3 September and was soon followed by all the members of the International Control Commission.<sup>928</sup>

International involvement in Albania ended in failure. Albania, with no administrative or state structures, and above all, with no military or police force, was left in a chaotic situation and at the mercy of foreign invaders. In 1923, on his death bed Herbert recalled the situation. His last words about Grey were positive. Although the British government did not see the process through, he felt that the Albanians received their title-deeds at the hands of Edward Grey.<sup>929</sup>

However, the most important personality in Britain who helped Albania in securing the status of the statehood among the European nations was Aubrey Herbert. Herbert, through the Albanian Committee and with his personal actions, from 1912 to the end of his life, had put in motion all possible mechanisms in Britain to help the Albanian state.

### Conclusion

The British Liberals judged the Balkans from a historical and ideological context and regarded the expulsion of the Ottomans from Europe as long overdue. Those who did not see the liberation of the Christians as a religious duty, were in the minority. Some of them even blamed the Christians as generators of the violence in the Balkans. They originated from the ranks of the Conservatives, and as such were anti-Liberal, and were also against Russian pan-Slav policies. Supporters of this policy were Conservatives, mostly heirs of Disraeli, and other non-Liberals, supporters of the principle of nationality or self-

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<sup>927</sup> Schmidl, p. 8.

<sup>928</sup> Pearson, pp. 78-79.

<sup>929</sup> Herbert, *Ben Kendim*, 215.

determination, including British imperialists, Muslims and Jews. They gathered to support Aubrey Herbert's idea of forming the Albanian Committee. Therefore, the Albanian Committee came as a response to the Balkan Committee. The Balkan Committee and Albanian Committee represented two different views of British and European attitudes based on two different patterns.<sup>930</sup>

The Albanian Committee favoured a multicultural and multi-religious Albania and aimed to treat equally all the communities in the Balkans. In reality, the Albanian Committee was something the Balkan Committee should have been if the Balkans or Macedonia were to have a proper solution. Even within the membership of the Albanian Committee, the Macedonian question had attracted considerable attention. That could be seen through the example of Herbert's activities during the Balkan Wars. When the Second Balkan War started, Herbert addressed the problem of Macedonia. He maintained that the spoils of the war lured the Allies, thus complicating the difficult situation in the Balkans even further. For the Allies, the division of Macedonia became a bigger problem than they thought. Herbert suggested that the danger could be stopped if Macedonia could be put beyond the reach of the Allies. As the Balkan people were not able to settle their differences and the quarrel was affecting Europe, Herbert suggested that the Macedonian problem could be solved only if 'Europe takes the bull by the horns and not, as in the past, by the tail'.<sup>931</sup>

While the Balkan Committee supported the war and the division of Macedonia, Herbert called for a compromise which he regarded as vital for bringing peace in the Balkans and stability in Europe. The compromise was an autonomous Macedonia. Herbert believed that an autonomous Macedonia would also ease difficulties on the eastern border of Albania. With this proposal, Herbert, probably wanted to eliminate future problems in the Balkans and secure an Albania within ethnic frontiers in its eastern part. However, with the Second Balkan War the situation developed differently and Herbert's proposal could not be considered.

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<sup>930</sup> Eugene Michail, 'Western Attitudes to War in the Balkans and the Shifting Meanings of Violence, 1912-91', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47. 2 (2012), pp. 219-239 (pp. 226-229) <[http://0-www.jstor.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/stable/23249185?pporigsite=summon&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://0-www.jstor.org.wam.leeds.ac.uk/stable/23249185?pporigsite=summon&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)> [accessed 11 September 2016].

<sup>931</sup> Ben Kendim, Macedonia and Europe, *Morning Post*, 9 July 1913 – DD/DRU 43.

Although the Albanian Committee became very active in promoting the Albanian cause it could not undo the effect which was created by Liberal ideas which dominated in British public opinion, press and politics.

The Liberal Gladstonians who had supported all the revolts against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, were not an exclusively British phenomenon. It was also a cross-European liberal trend which prioritised change in favour of the Christians and not peace in the Balkans. The international effect of Liberalism was seen in the London Conference which did not treat the Albanians according to the principle of nationality. Under these circumstances, unfavourable for the Albanians, Grey, pursuing the line of the British interest, had recognised the right of the Albanians to establish their own state. For that reason, Herbert praised the British government, specifically the foreign policy of Edward Grey. In Herbert's words, a great number of Albanian lives were spared because of the diplomatic and humanitarian work of the British government.<sup>932</sup>

The London Conference of Ambassadors did not bring a proper solution to the Albanian question but Herbert emphasised, more than once, that that was the most that could be done for Albania. However, the disinterested position of the British government on Albania that followed the London Conference caused Herbert to clash with Grey. The British government did not play its part in the international project of supporting the state building process of Albania. Partly as a result of this disinterested attitude, Albania failed as an international project as envisaged by the Great Powers in the Conference of London.

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<sup>932</sup> Aubrey Herbert, 'Albanian Independence', *Morning Post*, 13 March 1914 - DD/DRU 4/6, part 1.

## Conclusion

The Albanians' desire for a British king can be seen as an effort to place Albania under the protection of a European Power. Albania preferred Great Britain to the other Powers in Europe because it was seen as more democratic. Britain's position as a leading economic and political power, combined with the fact that, unlike Austria-Hungary and Italy, Britain had no direct interests in Albania, should be seen as further motivations. The leaders of the Albanian movement believed that a British king could secure a prosperous economic and political future for Albania. This also reflected Albania's perceived need to distance itself from the East against the backdrop of a declining Ottoman Empire. In this regard, the Albanians, like other Balkan nations, had adopted the 'western style of modernity' and wanted to be included in the 'process of Europeanisation.'<sup>933</sup>

This thesis has attempted to offer an analysis of the development of Albanian nationalism. The gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans during the nineteenth century gave impetus to Albanian nationalism, which placed the future of the Albanian-speaking lands as its priority. As seen above, Albanian ideologists developed the idea that the Albanians were descendants of the Illyrians, thereby reinforcing their longstanding presence in the Balkans and priority in their lands. Yet the leaders of this growing national movement were also aware of Albania's weakness. Throughout history Albania had never been an independent country, unlike its neighbours Bulgaria and Serbia, and there was no clear indication of Albanian ethnic borders or independent government. The lands considered by the Albanian leaders to belong to Albania repeatedly became objects of desire for neighbouring countries such as Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, which in many ways were better established as states. They also enjoyed the backing of the Powers; Greece was supported by most of the European Powers, while Russia stood firmly behind the Slavic nations of Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro. This situation made the Albanian leaders feel that the main danger to them was not the Great Powers but rather these small neighbouring states, thus making the question of protection of vital importance.

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<sup>933</sup> Mark Wheeler, 'Not So Black As It's Painted - The Balkan Political Heritage', in *The Changing Shape of the Balkans*, eds., by Francis Carter and Harry Norris (London: UCL Press, 1996), p. 4.



As seen in this thesis, for a long time Albanians saw the Ottoman Empire as their best option as a protector. As traditional patterns of Ottoman governance started to fail and the question of autonomy came into play, relations between the Ottomans and the Albanians entered into a crisis of modernisation in which old and new political elements came into conflict. Yet the key question of this thesis focused upon the moments in which Albanians desired autonomy while remaining inside the Ottoman Empire, which it was believed would lead to independence after the Empire's impending collapse. When this collapse eventually became apparent, Albanian leaders were forced to look for another protector in Britain.

This complex relationship between Albania and the Ottoman Empire from 1876 to 1914 has been analysed through the Albanians' repeated efforts for autonomy. Britain's relationship with the Ottoman Empire and, subsequently, its approach to the Albanian Question, can be best understood through the prism of British interests in the East. During this period the British Empire's main aim was to protect the route to India, their rule in Egypt and to prevent the expansion of Russian and later German power. In this regard, British governments considered Albania an indirect interest and the prevention of Russian expansion into the Balkans thus became a common goal for both the Albanians and the British. However, this common interest did not manifest itself consistently, with the British showing a higher degree of interest in Albania only on two occasions: the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). These conflicts challenged the very existence of the Ottoman Empire and led to two international peace conferences: the Conference of Berlin (1878) and the London Conference of Ambassadors (1912-1913). It was only during these wars that the British believed their major interests would be endangered if parts of the Balkans, and specifically Albania, which held a strategic position, were to fall under Russian rule or influence. Therefore, from the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, British policy took measures to preserve the presence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans for as long as possible. If the Ottoman Empire were to collapse, then British policy would seek to ensure that the Balkans would not come under Russian or Austro-Hungarian rule. The fall of Albania to either of these two empires would have endangered British interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the Adriatic.<sup>934</sup>

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<sup>934</sup> Guy, p. 246.

However, the nationalist movement in the Balkans became an obstacle to the British when it came to maintaining their interests. The existence of a distinct Albanian ethnicity and the desire of the Albanians to live autonomously from the Porte had been noted by British commentators since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Yet, it was not until 1878 that Albanian nationalism came to the surface as an organised political force and made a request for autonomy to the Powers at the Congress of Berlin. The Congress was the first international diplomatic event to which the Albanian leaders, through the Albanian League, addressed their request for autonomy.<sup>935</sup> Although this request was ignored, for the first time the question of Albania had been raised as an international problem to be solved by the European Powers. Though the Albanian League failed to achieve its political goal, it succeeded in elevating Albanian nationalism through subsequent developments in language, literature, education and culture. In the late nineteenth century, nationality was considered synonymous with language and ethnicity and so Albanian ideologists aspired to include all Albanian speakers in one independent state. In seeking to apply this idea, Albanian nationalism produced major developments in the Balkans. By 1912 the activities of the Albanian nationalists, by this time directed against Young Turk rule, destabilised the balances of power and strengthened the position of Albania's neighbouring states. The actions of Albanian nationalists therefore became a catalyst for broader changes in the Balkans and across the political spectrum of Albanian leaders.

By taking a stance against the Porte and the neighbouring countries, and without support from a European Power, Albanian efforts for independence would have been doomed to fail from the start. Albanian leaders feared failure would bring catastrophic results, possibly leading to the land being further divided between Albania's neighbours, who never ceased their territorial ambitions in the region. Therefore, staying under the umbrella of the Porte remained the only viable option. The Ottoman Empire was still considered merely as a temporary protector and a source of power to be exploited by the Albanian national movement at a later stage. Thus, the future of the Albanian national movement, which continued its bid for autonomy as a step towards independence, was closely linked with the fate of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>935</sup> Stavro Skendi, 'Beginnings of Albanian Nationalist and Autonomous Trends: The Albanian League, 1878-1881', *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 12. 2 (1953), pp. 219-232 (pp. 224-228).

This thesis began with a discussion of the image of Albania, which was initially constructed by travel writers and diplomats and which had an impact on both public perceptions and politicians. In analysing the origins and complexity of this subject, it has attempted to demonstrate that images of the Balkans and Albania in British public and political discourse continued to be presented and interpreted predominantly by the Liberals. Such images appeared primarily during times of crisis, when the Balkans was often presented as an imagined place 'marked by a variety of essentially invented caricatures.'<sup>936</sup> The research points out that Conservatives, on the other hand, viewed the Balkans without religious bias and, to a degree, held a favourable position towards the Albanian Question. Conversely, the religiously-framed view, which was built by Gladstone and adopted by many Liberals, ignored the Albanian national cause and gave priority to the liberation of Balkan Christians. This view was also widely adopted in British public opinion. Yet the lack of direct British interests in the Balkans did not stop debate between the Liberals and Conservatives taking place in the British Parliament and the press on the Albanian Question. This continued during and after the Congress of Berlin, and when Gladstone returned to power for the second time in 1880 the Albanian Question became a subject of discord between him and the Sultan. The differences between the Conservatives and the Liberals were most visible when Gladstone accused Disraeli, on several occasions, of deliberately delaying the implementation of the Treaty of Berlin and encouraging the Albanians to continue their refusal to give up territories that were assigned to Montenegro and Greece. However, the aftermath of the Congress also revealed that both parties had accepted the need to maintain an Ottoman presence in the Balkans. In this Conservatives and Liberals aimed to protect broader British interests mentioned above.<sup>937</sup>

Although Gladstone publicly appeared to believe that the Albanian Question had been solved in Berlin, he was still convinced that the Balkans was a troubled place. Therefore, Gladstone aimed to normalise relations with the Porte, which had temporarily deteriorated over the Albanian Question. Thus, Gladstone announced a solution for the Balkans. If this solution was to be realised, the nationalisms of the Balkans had to be restrained while

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<sup>936</sup> James Perkins, 'Peasants and Politics: Re-thinking the British Imaginative Geography of the Balkans at the Time of the First World War', *European History Quarterly*, 47 (2016), pp. 55-77 (p. 61).

<sup>937</sup> Medicott, *Congress of Berlin*, p. 7.

Austria-Hungary and Russia were not to be allowed to intervene in Balkan affairs. In order to protect British interests, the Liberals aimed to 'introduce tranquillity in the Balkans.'<sup>938</sup>

In connection with this, many Liberal politicians regarded the Balkan states (Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria) as 'reasonable instruments for safeguarding Britain's principal interests in the eastern Mediterranean.'<sup>939</sup> In return, the Liberals would supply the governments of these countries with advice, loans and arms, but would not offer any help in the form of military intervention.<sup>940</sup> Above all, Albania, with its Muslim majority, was not included in their plans because it was regarded as part of the Ottoman Empire. Despite growing public pressure calling for greater involvement in the Balkans, the British government was unable to exercise influence given its lack of major interests or military presence in the region.

This thesis shows a particular interest in the Macedonian question. Within this question I have attempted to present the importance of Macedonia for the Albanian Question by linking it with British and Ottoman policy. From 1903, when the Macedonian crisis came to the surface, British policy was, to a degree, influenced by the Balkan Committee. As an organisation dominated by Gladstonian Liberals, the Committee initially showed considerable interest in the Albanian Question but this gradually began to wane. As a result of its adherence to Gladstonian principles, the Committee showed little or no consideration for those nationalities or ethnic groups which did not belong to its preferred religion. For this reason, the Albanian Question in Macedonia did not receive sufficient attention from Committee members, the British government or the Powers, despite its status as an increasingly international problem.

Following the Macedonian crisis, British policy became more active in the Balkans. In reality, it was again considerations of their interests in India and Egypt that influenced this move, leading the British government to seek an understanding with Russia and sign the Reval Agreement in 1908. Thus, those Albanian leaders who considered Macedonia, and particularly the western part of it, as one of their major national interests felt themselves ignored by the Powers and the Porte. As a result, Albanian leaders intensified their search

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<sup>938</sup> Gordon Martel, 'Liberalism and Nationalism in the Middle East: Britain and the Balkan Crisis of 1886', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21. 2 (1985), pp. 172-191 (pp. 181-187).

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>940</sup> *Ibid.*

for a solution to their national question. The engagement of the Albanian nationalists in the structures of the Young Turk movement produced a new situation, not only in Albania but throughout the Balkans and elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. The Albanian leaders had hoped that the Young Turk Revolution would create favourable conditions to advance their national cause.

The British also supported the Young Turks in the hope of regaining the influence they had lost to the Germans. Although the Young Turk Revolution brought back the Ottoman Parliament as an important institution of democracy, it soon became clear that the Albanian Question could not be solved by peaceful political means. The activities of the Young Turks gave rise to Turkism as a new ideology, thereby changing the political landscape of the Ottoman Empire. The tensions between Albanian nationalism and Ottomanism were subsequently transformed into a confrontation with Turkism. The Albanian insurrections against the Porte that started in 1909 and went on until 1912 had severe repercussions throughout the Balkans.

The Albanian insurrection of 1911 in particular received some public support in Britain and, as a result, brought changes in British policy towards the Ottoman Empire and the Albanian Question. The British expressed sympathy for the Albanian request for autonomy and exercised some pressure on the Porte. However, the British and other Powers ultimately refrained from exerting excessive pressure so as not to further jeopardise their relationship with the Ottoman Empire for the sake of Albania.

By the time the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 broke out, the British had turned their back on the crumbling Ottoman Empire and supported the advance of the Balkan armies. The result of the Balkan Wars was also supported by public opinion. Liberal opinion did not favour the Albanian national cause, but the emergence of an Albanian state had shifted British interests in favour of the creation of an independent Albania.

Through the neutral position that the British held in the London Conference of Ambassadors, they intended to maintain the balance of power in Europe. Edward Grey had repeatedly declared that his government had no interest in the Albanian issue, despite it being at the heart of discussions. In reality, Albania's strategic position in the Balkans became an interest for the British government and British policy makers considered Albania

an instrument through which they could achieve their political objectives. An independent Albania, which came out of the Balkan Wars and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, prevented the replacement of the Porte's rule by Russia or Austria-Hungary. This was the aim of the British government and their policy towards the new-born state of Albania thus became supportive.

However, such British interests were not so vital as to lead them to provide a king and support an Albania within ethnic borders. For the British government, geopolitical interests were more important than the sentiment of the Albanians regarding their nationality. The British believed that the claims of the Albanians on ethnic settlement were too ambitious or radical. Thus, the claim of Albanian nationalism was not entirely compatible with the interests of the policy being made in London. Support for the Albanian state was stopped once it became obvious that the Russian and Habsburg empires would not extend their rule to the Adriatic and Mediterranean and thereby endanger British interests. The British government believed it had secured its interests and did not continue to support the development of Albanian state institutions, nor did it show interest in the geographical size of Albania.

Had Liberal public opinion pressurised the British government to produce and implement a more favourable policy towards Albania, as it did for other Balkan nations, the situation could have been different and Albania could have included most parts of the four *vilayets* to which it aspired. The work of Edith Durham and the activities of Aubrey Herbert through the Albanian Committee could not undo the effect that the Liberals had created on British public opinion and government. Herbert's work on behalf of the Albanian state could be characterised as an effort to influence the public and the British government to go beyond existing interests, but it soon became apparent this was not possible and Herbert was therefore willing to accept the actions of Edward Grey. Albania became independent but without most of the territories of Kosovo and the Janina *vilayets*. Yet, as Herbert declared on more than one occasion, things could have been worse for Albania if it was not for the British interest which was manifested by Edward Grey at the London Conference.

## Appendixes:

Appendix 1: Boundaries of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro as proposed by San Stefano Treaty;

Appendix 2: New borders of Greece according to Conference of Berlin 1880;

Appendix 3: Map of Albania as claimed by Albanian Provisional Government and Albanian Committee.

Appendix 1









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