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Albanian Government Relations with the Ottoman Administration and Army during the Balkan Wars Years (1912-1913)

The consecutive uprisings at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century had turned the Albanian case into the main occupation of the Ottoman Empire. The solution to this issue was the most serious problem for the Empire's foreign policy, which faced several dilemmas. This is because Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece supported by Russia strongly opposed the creation of an autonomous administration in Albania. "Such a power," said France's ambassador to Istanbul, Bompard, "could not be decided without causing racial warfare throughout the European Turkey."¹ Also, if the autonomy of the Albanian vilayet was realized, the Christian peoples of the Empire would not agree in any way to undergo the Ottoman administration for a longer time; Albanian autonomy would be associated with the autonomy of other territories whose borders would not be easy to define. This would also be the end of Ottoman domination in Europe. According to the French diplomat, the establishment of an Albanian state within the borders claimed by Slavs would not satisfy the Albanians, while the creation of a wider Albanian state would incite the uprising of non-Albanian Christians against their domination². If Albanians were granted extensive privileges, Macedonia and Epirus would be disturbed and try to gain a similar status. Under their example, similar actions would take place in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. The territories of autonomous Albania had to be narrower because, the formation of a great Albania would push the continual turmoil throughout the Balkan Peninsula, the consequences of which in the assessment of the Great Powers were very dangerous³.

The Balkan states had long talks, while their press hymned the great historic momentum and solidarity among the Balkan peoples. Under the slogan "The Balkans of the Balkans," a military alliance (Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro), which declared war on the Ottoman Empire. On October 8, 1912, Montenegro was the first to undertake such a step⁴ in the hope that whatever its end, Russia would never allow Montenegro to subdue or lose territory. The Alliance of Balkan States was created and operated under Russian defense⁵.

The defeat of the Ottoman garrisons from the Balkan armies encouraged the Albanian patriots to abandon their traditional autonomy strategy within the Ottoman Empire and seek full independence. With the proclamation of Albania's Independence on 28 November 1912, the Vlora Assembly announced the establishment of a provisional government. Ismail Qemali, Prime Minister, on November 29, 1912, announced the Foreign Ministers of Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece on Albania's Declaration of Independence, with the desire to live in peace

¹ *Archiv du Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres*, Paris, në *Arkivin e Institutit të Historisë* (më tej: *AIH*), F 206. Raport i ambasadorit të Francës në Stamboll Bompard, për kryeministrin dhe ministrin e Jashtëm, Poincare, Stamboll, 4 gusht 1912.

² *Po aty*.

³ *AMAE*, në *AIH*, F 206. Telegram i ambasadorit të Francës në Rusi, George Louis, për kryeministrin dhe ministrin e Jashtëm Poincare, Shën Petërsburg, 7 gusht 1912.

⁴ E.C.Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-1913*, Kembrixh, Harvard University Press, 1938, p.33; Yusuf Himet Bayur, *Balkan savařları*, C.I, Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, 1999, s.56.

⁵ *HHSSt.A.P.A.A.* në *AIH*, Vj. 22-22-2288, Promemorje e shefit të Shtabit Madhor Schemua për Perandorinë Austro-Hungareze, Vjenë, 28.9.1912.

with all neighboring states⁶. A note with the same content was handed over to representatives of Russia, Austria and Italy who were established in Vlora⁷.

On 2 December 1912, Ismail Qemali telegraphed the Grand Vizier with the message of provisional government formation. This decision was motivated by the complete isolation of Albania and the inability of the Ottoman Empire to protect it from external enemies. He assured Mehmet Kamil Pasha that Albania would strive to maintain religious ties with the Caliphate and to choose a political organization that would fit the Ottoman Empire's best interests. In this telegram, Ismail Qemali, had carefully avoided the word independence⁸. On 2 December, the Ottoman Commander of the Western Army, Ali Riza Pasha, forwarded to the Vlora Prefecture a telegram of the Ottoman General Deputy Commander General, Nazim Pasha, who wrote that "We are receiving news that you have taken the initiative to make a parliament in Vlora, in order to proclaim the independence of Albania. We are taking steps to establish an autonomous government-related administration in Albania, including all Albanians inhabited places, just as it has been before. This is a safer form than the formation of an independent Albania⁹. "The telegram, in fact, was addressed personally Ismail Qemali, but Albania's independence had already been proclaimed. Two days later, on 4 December, Ismail Qemali regretted the Ottoman government that despite the contribution and loyalty of the Albanians to the Ottoman state, as a result of the circumstances created, now they were forced to move on their own¹⁰.

Although the provisional government of Vlora had decided to maintain a neutral position, the Ottoman troops were still considering Albanians as allies. The commander of western army, who continued his resistance to the castle of Ioannina, asked Ismail Qemali that the employees of the Vlora telegraphic office should not stop these links with the High Gate because the continuation of the correspondence with Istanbul was essential to the fate of the two countries. Therefore, the telegraphic office of Vlora should not cause any obstacle in the transmission of telegrams¹¹. In his reply, Ismail Qemali wrote to the Ottoman Commander that he had secured the speed and continuity of correspondence between the Western armies and the high authorities of Istanbul. A special officer was sent to the telegraphic office and he had given orders for its operation¹².

Forces of the Western Army informed the General Staff that it had kept a soft stance toward the Vlora government and sought further instructions. His Excellency addressed the Ottoman government for further instructions, which in a letter dated December 16, 1912

⁶ *Arkivi Qendror i Shtetit* (më tej: *AQSh*), Fondi (më tej: F) 145, Viti (më tej: V) 1912, Dosja (më tej: D) 1, dok nr.42 103/12. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit, drejtuar vendeve të Aleancës Ballkanike; "Arnavutluğun Istikbali", *Sabah*, 1 Aralık 1912, s.4.

⁷ *Po aty*, dok nr.104/12; Arnavut Mütefekkirlerinden Biriyle Mülakat, *Ikdam*, 5 Aralık 1912, s.1-2

⁸ *HHSt.A.PA.A. në AIH*, Vj. 22-8-875, Telegram i konsullit Lejhanec nga Vlora për Ministrin të Punëve të Jashtme, kontin Berchtold në lidhje me Shpalljen e Pavarësisë së Shqipërisë dhe qëndrimin e Turqisë, Vlorë, 4.12.1912.

⁹ *AQSh*, F. 145, V.1912, D.1, dok nr.449. Telegram i Komandantit të Armatës së Perëndimit; Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, C.II, Kısım 2, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991, s.334.

¹⁰ Bilgin Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve arnavutlar, II.Meşrutiyet Döneminde Arnavut Ulusçuluğu ve Arnavutluk Sorunu*, İstanbul: Büke Yayınları, 2004, s.488; İsmail Hakkı Okday, *Yanya'dan Ankaraya*: Sebül Yayinevi, 1994, s.79; "Arnavudluk'da Hükümeti Muvakkat Teşkili", *Sabah*, 5 Aralık 1912, s.1.

¹¹ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.45, fl.2. Telegram i komandantit turk të armatës së Perëndimit, drejtuar Ismail Qemalit ku ankohet për shërbimin e dobët telegrafik, 13.12.1912.

¹² *AIH*, A-IV-334, Materiale arkivore për vitet 1912-1915 të mbledhura në AQSH, nga Aleks Buda, Stefanaq Pollo dhe Kristo Frashëri, (më tej: *Mat. ark*) vëll.I (nëndor 1912-mars 1913), Dok.nr. 10.423 Telegram i Ismail Qemalin për Kryekomandën e Armatës së Perëndimit, f.47.

approved the continuation of such a policy¹³. Correspondence of the Temporary Government of Vlorë Ismail Qemali with the Ministry of War in Istanbul regarding the situation and assistance that should be given to the Ottoman forces in the southeastern areas of Albania confirms the fact that between the two countries there was an underground cooperation. The War Ministry in Istanbul informed Ismail Qemali that because of the blockade of the Greek fleet, the supply of food to the West Army and the Ottoman forces in Ioannina would be made by ships to be anchored near the ravine of the Shkumbin and Seman rivers. Therefore, it required that the provisional government of Vlorë takes measures by appointing persons responsible for controlling these points, signaling the ships to be unloaded and transporting these foods to the Ottoman garrisons and Ioannina¹⁴.

The commander of the Ottoman forces in Fier, Colonel Ali Avni, asked to know the Vlorë government's view of Ottoman ships that would come to the Seman River Gorge to transport grain. For this secret operation, the provisional government of Vlorë was also informed by the Ministry of War in Istanbul¹⁵.

The attitude of the government of Vlorë and Ismail Qemali to the Ottoman troops on Albanian territory is clear from a telegram to Berat's prefect. "Our main goal is to save the homeland from the clutches of the enemy, to guard against the risk of extermination of the army, and strengthen it to clash with the enemy. This is vital for us; and at the same time a sacred duty to the army chiefs."¹⁶

The commander of the Ottoman troops in Gjirokastra, Zija Pasha Mati asked Ismail Qemali to remove the barriers of the office and telegraph officers, which confounded and hampered operations and victories of the Ottoman army¹⁷. This request received full support from Ismail Qemali who wrote to Zija Pasha that it was true and that every Albanian understood that the future of Albania could be ensured by the victory of the Ottoman army. Therefore, he sought their understanding that, the difficulties of the correspondence or of the telegraphic office were not at all intentional. Additionally, the officers of this office had priority to give maximum importance to the Ottoman army telegrams. But the difficulties and delays involved were due to the fact that the alphabet of the telegrams needed to be change from Ottoman to French alphabet¹⁸.

Faced with a greater risk as the one coming from the Balkan countries' alliance, on December 20, 1912, Ismail Qemali wrote to the Ottoman Command that he gratefully appreciated the victories of the Ottoman army against the Greeks, through which was saved the southern part of Albania from the enemy's attack¹⁹. He also explained the attitude of the government of Vlorë in the face of Europe, an attitude which aimed to stop the enemy armies that had entered the Albanian territories as much as possible, to prove the existence of national

¹³ *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, (Arkivi i Kryeministrisë së Perandorisë Osmane, më tej: BOA), B.E.O, IH, nr.309255.*

¹⁴ *AQSH, F.145, V.1912, D.II-40, fl.19-20. Telegram i Komandantit të Armatës së Perëndimit Ali Riza Pasha për Ismail Qemalin, ku bashkëngjitur i dërgon edhe telegramin e Ministrisë së Luftës në Stamboll, 17.12.1912.*

¹⁵ *AQSH, F.145, V.1912, D.II-49, fl.3. Telegram i Komandantit të forcave osmane në Fier kolonel Ali Avni për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 19.12.1912.*

¹⁶ *AQSH, F.145, V.1912, D.II-48, fl.1. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit për prefektin e Beratit, 9.12.1912.*

¹⁷ *AQSH, F.145, V.1912, D.II-45, fl.1. Telegram i komandantit të forcave osmane në Gjirokastrë Zija Pashë Matit për Ismail Qemalin, 13.12.1912.*

¹⁸ *Po aty, f.3. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit për Komandantin e forcave osmane në Gjirokastrë Zija Pashë Mati, 14.12.1912.*

¹⁹ *AQSH, F.145, V.1912, D.I dok nr. 8086. Telegram i kryetarit të qeverisë së përkohshme të Vlorës, drejtuar kryekomandantit të armatës turke të Perëndimit në Janinë.*

unity, against the enemies who claimed that the existence of an Albanian national movement and their intention to participate in the London Conference as a free and formed nation was a utopia²⁰.

Considering that the Conference of Ambassadors gathered in London just three days ago (December 17, 1912-HB) had not yet established a final status regarding Albania, Ismail Qemali, as an experienced diplomat, made known to this command that Albanians desired that the final status of the regime in Albania not to damage the sovereignty that the Ottoman Empire intended to provide in Rumeli. According to him, one should not think at all that Albanians would follow a path contrary to Ottoman general interests. But on the other hand, he demanded from the Ottoman government not to hinder Albania in the measures it was forced to take to escape the captive politics of the enemy²¹.

In fact, with the creation of the provisional government of Vlora, many Albanian nationalists thought that there was no need for resistance against the Greek occupation because, according to them, Albania was a free and independent state who wanted to live in peace with it all the neighbors, and in the first place with the Greeks. According to Eqrem bej Vlora, they started from the conviction that the Albanians were to stand neutral in the face of the march of other Balkan peoples, and would gain the friendship of the enemies of the Ottoman Empire and thus secure the existence of Albania. Indeed, it was a precaution imposed by the circumstances in which the Provisional Government of Vlora was found, which was at the same time a favorable propaganda that suited the enemies, which brought great damage to Albania²².

Ismail Qemali, who understood that the country was threatened by the Greek armies, wrote to the Ottoman commander that: "The defense and discipline of the Ioannina army means to ambush Greek aspirations that want to suppress us, and therefore we expect instructions on how we should try and what advice and communication we should do. This form of government must be maintained, as it suits the political interest until the Conference convened (while it was assembled-H.B.) and Europe to make a final decision on Ottoman sovereignty in Albania and on the Albanian state. We pray it is your great pleasure to accept this reality and to appreciate the unwanted cases arising from an opposite opinion."²³ After expressing the desire for mutual solidarity, Ismail Qemali sought to withdraw any order given to the commands and Ottoman troops in the Albanian territory²⁴.

Ali Riza Pasha, commander of the Ottoman forces, declared to Aziz Pasha Vrioni, prefect of Berat, that Ismail Qemali was of the opinion that Greek politics aimed to annex Janina. Therefore, to attract the Ottoman army's attention and to stir up panic among the people, Athens was likely to send forces inside the Albanian territory. Aziz Pasha wrote to Ismail Qemali that they were organizing forces to cope with this blow. As part of this engagement, he also demanded that sons of two or three Albanian pashalar in Vlora, to go to Berat and motivate an armed resistance²⁵.

Among the Ottoman armies, the West and Vardar armies, they were two groups profiled regarding their attitudes towards the government of Vlora and Albanians. This had caused some

²⁰ *Po aty.*

²¹ *Po aty.*

²² E.Vlora, *Kujtime...*, f.316-318.

²³ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.I dok nr. 8086. Telegram i kryetarit të qeverisë së përkohshme të Vlorës, drejtuar kryekomandantit të armatës turke të Perëndimit në Janinë.

²⁴ *Po aty.*

²⁵ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-63, fl.3. Telegram i prefektit të Beratit Aziz Pashë Vrioni për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 25.12.1912

of them to complain to the respective commands against Sait and Mahmut Hajretin Pasha that they had cooperated with the Albanians leaving them freed their flag and had caused the extermination of soldiers from starvation. This pushed Aziz Pasha to help these Ottoman personalities and the Ottoman army seeks from the government of Vlora tax collection to help the Ottoman army²⁶. Ismail Qemali demanded from the Berat Commander, Mehmet Sait Pasha, to consider the neutral zone that reached the coast. This area included a perimeter that would provide the provisional government of Vlora with a limited sovereignty, but nevertheless safe to carry out its activity²⁷.

This compromise was successful for Albanians. As a request, Mehmet Sait Pasha asked for information from Ismail Qemali about the amount of ammunition and military tents in the Ottoman barracks and the Vlora barracks²⁸. Within this cooperation, a number of known Albanian personalities were sent to provinces and villages where they had influence to persuade the people to assist Ottoman forces with food and volunteer forces²⁹. This cooperation was also extended to the officers who deserted from the front of Ioannina and were sheltered in Vlora³⁰.

The chairman of the National Defense Commission of Delvina asked Ismail Qemali that, in order to assist the Western Army, which was facing the Greek attack around Qarri, the increase of other posters of Kolonja, it was necessary that within four five days to be sent to join the Western Armies battalions of reservists and volunteers in Berat, Mallakastra, Skrapar, Tepelena, Përmet, Leskovik, Kolonja and Gjirokastra. This, according to him, would help the Ottoman troops in collaboration with the Albanians to shatter the Greek forces³¹.

An even closer communication existed especially between Ismail Qemali and Halil Bey Leskovik from whom the mayor of the provisional government of Vlora in the conditions of complete isolation sought information on the talks of the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers at the London Ambassadors Conference³². From the documentation we have discovered so far, there is some communication between the provisional government of Vlora and the Ottoman government, although limited³³.

According to the reviewed documentation, the Ottoman troops' relationship with the Vlora government continued to be normal even in the first months of 1913. Thus, Suleiman Efendi, the prefect of Tepelena, on March 17, informed the Vlora government that Ottoman pashas appealed to that government to provide them with information on political

²⁶ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-63, fl.30. Telegram i prefektit të Beratit Aziz Pashë Vrioni për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 25.12.1912.

²⁷ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-43, fl.1. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit për Komandantin e Korp-Armatës së V osmane në Berat, Mehmet Sait Pashën, 21.12.1912.

²⁸ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-43, fl.3. Telegram i Komandantit të Korp-Armatës së V osmane në Berat, Mehmet Sait Pasha, për Ismail Qemalin, 24.12.1912.

²⁹ *Po aty*, fl.8. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit për Komandantin e Korp-Armatës së V osmane në Berat, Mehmet Sait Pashën, 28.12.1912.

³⁰ *Po aty*, fl.12. Telegram i Komandantit të Korp-Armatës së V osmane në Berat, Mehmet Sait Pasha, për Ismail Qemalin, 12.12.1913.

³¹ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-42, fl.3. Telegram i Kryetarit të Komisionit të Mbrojtjes Kombëtare të Delvinës Mehmet Ali Pasha për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 26.12.1912.

³² *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-44, fl.5. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit për komandantin e forcave osmane Halil bej Leskovikun, 28.12.1912.

³³ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-63, fl.24. Telegram i Qemal Namikut pranë qeverisë provizore të Vlorës drejtuar Emin beut në Lushnje, 28.12.1912. ("Në një telegram shifër që u muar sot nga Sadareti thuhet se Stambolli po përpiket për formimin e një Shqipërie")

developments³⁴. He also reported on the needs the Ottoman army had for food. Though he was trying to fulfill them, he had a lot of difficulties as the grain was lacking and he had found it reasonable to meet these needs in the first place³⁵. Ottoman soldiers who were placed in the outskirts of Vlora demanded from Ismail Qemali the ammunition that had remained in the barracks of the city for the purpose of shattering its territory³⁶. This fits to Ismail Qemali's request, as it would break the "status quo".

The desertion of Albanians from the front of Ioannina, because of the diversion of the Greek agent, that the Albanians had already established their own national state and had no work with the Ottomans, had created a very complicated situation. This forced the Vlora government to address a circular to all provinces, expressing its bitterness, about the desertion of Albanian reserve soldiers³⁷. After pointing out that all Albanians were obliged to protect their lands, sparing nothing to save Albanians from the enemy who had invaded, Ismail Qemali, ordered that "without losing time, all Albanian patriots to lay down arms and help Janina. This task falls short of the pair, which must make the people understand and guide it alone. However, we commend you and please let us know with a touching tone, so that all the people are ready and running for the protection of the homeland."³⁸ Ismail Qemali ordered the prefecture of Gjirokastra and regions of Tepelena, Përmet and Leskovik that "If there are soldiers who have deserted to be captured as exemplary for others and return to their garrisons. These soldiers, along with their families, are ordered to defect because it is a shame for them and a great danger for the homeland."³⁹ In the framework of these measures, on December 8, the prefect of Gjirokastra, Fehmi Beu, organized a group of 7 people elected by the National Defense Commission and escorted with armed men to the nearby villages to capture the deserted soldiers to bring them back to Ioannina⁴⁰. A group of patriots led by Aziz Pasha Vrioni wrote to Ismail Qemali that if Janina falls, national independence was jeopardized.

The danger was no longer due to the lack of military power, but due to the lack of food for the Ottoman army, and according to them, this would cause the eternal disappearance of South Albania. In the absence of information, they believed that the London Conference had left Janina within the map of Albania. So the attack on her was considered a blow to national independence and national existence. According to them, Albanians had to protect their honor and rights by joining the Ottoman brothers who consisted of 80,000 troops. The defense of Janina was considered by Albanian patriots as an essential issue for Albania. They asked Ismail Qemali to order Bektash Cakran, Musa Hamit Agait, Bektash aga Çorrus, Veli Bey Kelcyra, Dervish Bey Bicaku and Qamil Bey, who were in Vlora, to go as soon as possible and to encourage the people of their provinces Mallakastër, Përmet, Lushnje and Elbasan to gather volunteers and food reserves⁴¹.

³⁴ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.19, fl.16. Telegram i nënprefektit të Tepelenës, drejtuar Ismail Qemalit.

³⁵ *Po aty*, fl.29.

³⁶ *Po aty*, fl.42.

³⁷ *Po aty*, F.145, V.1912, D.42, fl.21. Qarkore e qeverisë së përkohshme të Vlorës, drejtuar të gjitha krahinave të Shqipërisë.

³⁸ *Po aty*.

³⁹ *AIH*, A-IV-334, Mat.ark, vëll.I (nëndor 1912-mars 1913), Dok.nr. 8.174. Telegram i Ismail Qemalit për prefekturën e Gjirokastrës, nënprefekturën e Tepelenës, Përmetit dhe Leskovikut, Vlorë, 7.12. 1912, f.63.

⁴⁰ *Po aty*, dok.nr. 8.182. Telegram i prefektit të Gjirokastrës për Ismail Qemalin, Gjirokastrë, 8.12.1912, f.64.

⁴¹ *Po aty*, dok.nr. 11.082, Telegram i një grupi patriotësh të kryesuar nga Aziz Pashë Vrioni për Ismail Qemalin, shkurt 1913, f.20-21.

These measures brought the temporal government of Vlorë into co-operation with the High Porte and its troops on the Greek front, and compromised the previous statements of neutrality in the conflict. But that came after the Greek government had not responded to Ismail Qemali's call to end the fighting in Albanian lands. However, after the occupation of Himara and Korçë, she had commanded her armies to march toward the North⁴². This gave the government of Vlorë not only the right, but charged with the obligation, that even though it had proclaimed neutrality in the Balkan conflict, to defend any kind of means, of Albanian lands by cooperating with the Ottoman army.

After the defeat of Kumanovo and Bitola, numerous Ottoman troops of the Vardar Army pulled into Korçë. With the fall of Korçë into the hands of the Greeks and Elbasan in the hands of K-Serbs, other units of the Ottoman army retreated and concentrated in the Berat-Lushnjë-Fier triangle⁴³. After the collapse of Ioannina in March 1913, these forces were to join other shattered departments of the Ottoman army pulled by the progress of the Greeks, waiting to get to Istanbul.

With the exception of Vlorë, in the other provinces where there were Ottoman armies, during the time they stood there, there existed a couple of powers: that of the Vlorë government and that of the Ottoman military power. On February 11, 1913, the High Porte commanded the command of the Ottoman forces in Lushnjë, that besides the Ottoman flag, these garrisons also set up the Albanian flag⁴⁴.

The government of Vlorë began pursuing a rapprochement policy with the High Gate. In an interview that Ismail Qemali gave to the Italian newspaper "Giornale d'Italia", he stated that the relations of Albania with the Ottoman Empire were quite peaceful. "In Vlorë," he declared, "we have received an official announcement of the Grand Vizier, who recognizes Albania's independence and the right to have our flag."⁴⁵ The Ottoman government had informed the Muttessarif of Berat that it now recognized independence of Albania and asked the remaining Albanian military authorities to respect the Albanian flag.

Ismail Qemali maintained a constant communication with the Command of Ottoman troops led by Halil Pasha Leskoviku. But he was careful that these relations did not compromise the policy of an independent Albania and his government. Thus Mr. L. Ceskov's request to send a group of horsemen to draw an amount of flour in Vlorë was labeled as a fantasy by Ismail Qemali. Such a thing was impossible to accomplish because not only lacked the right means of transport, but that action could be dictated by Greece and Italy and would then trigger Vlorë's burning of the enemy. According to Ismail Qemali, the condition of the army and of this small country could not endure these kinds of incidents. Such an attitude was opposed by Halil Leskovik on the grounds that the Ottoman armies deployed in Berat, Gjirokastra and some other cities of Albania had not prevented the rise of the Albanian flag, while if they wanted it could only be stopped by a small initiative. According to him, the trip to Vlorë of 5 or 10 horsemen should not be misunderstood by the Albanian authorities. However Ismail Qemali insisted on not sending this company, because, this would cause the Greek offensive. He agreed to send only

⁴² Herbert Adams Gibbons, *The New Map of Europe (1911-1914): The Story Of The Recent European Diplomatic Crises And Wars And Of Europe's Present Catastrophe*, New York: The Century Co, 1915, p.357-360.

⁴³ Süleyman Külçe, *Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak, Askeri, Hususi hayatı*, Izmir 1946, s.70; Ali Gümüş, *Kahraman Asker Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak*, İstanbul: Tercüman Ali ve Kültür Kitaplığı Yayınları, 1986, s.12-14.

⁴⁴ *AİH*, A-IV-334, Mat.ark, vëll.I (nëndor 1912-mars 1913), dok.nr.278, Telegram i Aziz Pashë Vronit për Ismail Qemalin, 14 mars 1913, f.29.

⁴⁵ *Giornale d'Italia*, 2.IV.1913.

one clerk to whom the Vlora government would give him help to transport the flour if it came⁴⁶. This persuaded Halil Pasha to renounce his plan. In his answer to Ismail Qemali, he wrote: "Only one employee was given permission to come to Vlora. In particular, please ensure that the correspondence between the West and Istanbul Armies does not suffer any kind of stumbling block. Best regards."⁴⁷

This attitude further strengthened the climate of cooperation between the two sides. Ismail Qemali wrote to Halil Pasha that he was still in contact with Sadriazam (Prime Minister of the Ottoman Empire-HB) but had to do this through Janina, which caused time loss and that open telegrams passed from Austria and Italy, which he said was not suitable. To keep in touch with Istanbul directly, he asked the Ottoman Commander to send a special officer together with a special encoder⁴⁸. In memories of the Balkan Wars, commander of the Vardar army, General Zeki Pasha, who in this period together with a portion of Ottoman forces was deployed in Fier, writes that on April 27, 1913, from the city of Vlora had arrived 500 tons of food. This indicates the underground co-operation between the Ottoman forces and the Vlora government, with the only condition that the former respects the territory controlled by the latter one⁴⁹. However, there were also cases where different individuals killed the Ottoman soldiers to ransack their weapons."⁵⁰ The Ottoman troops did not retaliate for these abuses even though they would have been able to endanger the existence of the Interim Government if their leaders wanted to bring all acts of the population into the lawsuit of justice.⁵¹ In a telegram that the commander of the Vardar armament sent to the Vlora government, he wrote: "The Ottoman army's remains from the Balkan Wars, pulled in Albania to protect this country together, and not to hand over to the enemy, but together with the Albanian brothers, with whom they have fought together for hundred years, and known for their hospitality and loyalty to those who are now being entrusted. Although such a friendly attitude was not recognized by some unworthy Albanians, we want to forget these horrible days for both of us, to forget, and together, hand in hand, defending your lands, we can redeem what you have given us and to the Empire for fifteen years. For this reason, we expect from the Interim Government and the Albanian people not only understanding for our words, but also the testimony of a state of affairs."⁵² Ismail Qemali and the Albanian authorities, unable to meet the Ottoman army's needs, however, were willing to help as much as possible. On February 13, 1913, he responded to this command that: "My purpose is not to give the people the animals of the army nor to break the rule that is in force for extracting and destroying state revenues.

The amount of daily food needed for the Berat army and the livestock feed was determined after entering correspondence with Sait Pasha (commander of the Ottoman troops of Berat-H.B). According to this, it is needed food for 10,000 soldiers and 2,300 horses. A part of the clerics and debtors flee somewhere else only not to pay. In order to ensure as much income as possible, we have sent out a special employee who, along with Berat's tax collector, will also have a squad of gendarmes to force those one here and in Berat. The release of these revenues

⁴⁶ *AIH*, A-IV-334, Mat.ark, vëll.I (nëndor 1912-mars 1913), dok.nr.8.109, Korrespondencë telegrafike midis Ismail Qemalit dhe Halil Pashë Leskovikut, 28-29 nëntor 1913, f.53-54.

⁴⁷ *Po aty*, f.55-56.

⁴⁸ *Po aty*, f.57.

⁴⁹ *Zeki Paşa'nın Balkan Savaşı Hatıratı*, Çev: Sema Demirtaş, İstanbul: Alfa, 2012, s.116.

⁵⁰ Rahmi Apak, *Yetmişlik bir subayın hatıraları*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988, s.81; Aram Aydonyan, *Balkan Savaşı*, İstanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 1999, s.355-357.

⁵¹ E.Vlora- Godin, *Ndihmesë për...*, f.228.

⁵² *Po aty*, f.233.

will be made within the financial rules and the amount of money that will be collected through the affiliate will be allocated only to the needs of the army."⁵³

The limited capacity of the Albanian provinces was impossible to hold the exhausted Ottoman army with grain.⁵⁴ Lushnja, Fieri, Berat and Mallakstra were filled with Ottoman soldiers whose needs, according to Azis Pasha Vrioni could only be sustained for one month.⁵⁵ Chief of Staff Remzi beu threatened the Albanian authorities of Lushnja that by order of Xhavid Pasha if the cereals needed and war taxes were not collected he would create a detachment of 200 soldiers to collect them by force.⁵⁶ Albania was destroyed, economic hardship failed to meet the needs of the Ottoman army. However, both the Vlora government and the Albanian people tried to help it.⁵⁷

⁵³ *AQSH*, F.145III, V.1912, D. 4, fl.39. Letër e kryetarit të qeverisë së përkohshme të Vlorës, drejtuar komandës së ushtrisë turke të Vardarit, 13.2.1913.

⁵⁴ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-65, fl.28. Telegram i prefektit të Beratit Aziz Pashë Vrioni për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 17.3.1913.

⁵⁵ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-65, fl.39. Telegram i prefektit të Beratit Aziz Pashë Vrioni për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 25.3.1913.

⁵⁶ *AQSH*, F.145, V.1912, D.II-65, fl.43. Telegram i prefektit të Beratit Aziz Pashë Vrioni për kryetarin e qeverisë provizore të Vlorës, Ismail Qemalin, 30.3.1913.

⁵⁷ Petro Harizi, *Historia kronografike e Qarkut të Korçës që nga lufta ballkanike e deri më sot*, Boston Mass 1919, f.4; Nilüfer Hatemi, *Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak ve Günlükleri*, Cilt.I, Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002, 197-214; Ibrahim Artuç, *Balkan Savaşı*, Istanbul: Kastaş A.Ş. Yayınları, 1988, s.279.