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## The Young Turk Revolution and the Assembly of Ferizaj 1908

### Jontürk Devrimi Ve Ferizaj 1908 Meclisi

#### Abstract

Although 1908 was a historic event, also it was special to the Albanian people. Albanians have never stopped their efforts for the freedom and independence of Albania. After the large loss of the Balkan territory, the Ottoman Empire gradually began to lose its influence over Albanian lands.

This event did not pass easily, influenced also by the Young Turk movement and the influence of the unhappy crowd, in order to benefit from this political measure, the Young Turk easily won the sympathy of the Albanian people. The Young Turks managed to turn the national war scenes into a peace center in the Balkans under the umbrella of the July 1908 Revolution, the Young Turks committees acted in Resen, Ohrid, Prespa, Skopje, Mitrovica, Ferizaj, Prizren etc. these were Albanians who had indirect links with the Albanian Committee “For the Freedom of Albania”.

In the “Union and Progress” committee were Albanian patriots such as: Ibrahim Temo, Ismail Qemali, Dervish Hima, Hoxha Kadri Prishtina etc. Although Albanians support the Young Turk movement, they remain betrayed because, after the Young Turks came to power, they did not live up to their promises, but they did even worse than the previous power over the Albanians by imposing new taxes that were extremely impoverished Albanians, already economically devastated.

**Keywords:** Revolution, Uprising, Albanian, Young Turks, Ferizaj, etc.

#### Öz

1908 yılı tarihi bir olay olmasına rağmen, bu olay Arnavut halkı için özeldi. Arnavutlar Arnavutluk'un özgürlüğü ve bağımsızlığı konusundaki çabalarını hiçbir zaman durdurmamışlar. Balkan topraklarının çoğunun kaybedilmesinden sonra Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Arnavut toprakları üzerindeki etkisini yavaş yavaş kaybetmeye başladı.

Jön Türkler hareketinden ve memnuniyetsiz kalabalığın etkisinden de etkilenen böyle bir olay kolayca geçemedi, bu siyasi önlemden yararlanmak için Jön Türkler Arnavut halkının sempatisini kolayca kazandılar. Genç Türkler, Temmuz 1908 Devrimi çatısı altında ulusal savaş sahnelerini Balkanlar'da bir barış merkezine dönüştürmeyi başardılar; genç Türk komiteleri Resen, Ohrid, Prespa, Üşküp, Mitrovica, Ferizaj, Prizren vb. Faaliyet gösterdiler, bunların başında Arnavutluk'un “Arnavutluk Özgürlüğü Komitesi” ile dolaylı bağlantıları olan Arnavutlardı.

“Birlik ve İlerleme” komitesi Arnavut vatanseverleri şöyle bulunuyordu: Ibrahim Temo, Ismail Qemali, Derviş Hima, Hoxha Kadri Prishtine vb. Arnavutlar Jön turk hareketini destekleseler de ihanete uğradılar, çünkü Jön Turkler iktidara geldikten sonra vaatlerini yerine getirmediler, ancak son derece fakirleşmiş yeni vergiler uygulayarak önceki hükümetten daha kötü davrandılar. Arnavutlar, zaten ekonomik olarak harap olmuşlardı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Devrim, İsyân, Arnavut, Genç Türkler, Ferizaj, vb.

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## Introduction

The Albanians never ceased to seek freedom and autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, which began to weaken with the Eastern Crisis in the summer of 1875 with the outbreak of uprisings that began in Bosnia as a movement against Ottoman tax collectors and soon erupted in Bulgaria as well. Serbia and Montenegro were also involved in the war against Turkey. This was when Russia's pro-Russian movement peaked in the years (1875-1878). Thus, when the Turks were winning against the Serbs, Russia came to Serbia's aid and Russian volunteers landed in Serbia to fight against Turkey.<sup>1</sup> England could not help Turkey against Russia as they did in the Crimean War because the Liberal Party raised the issue of the Turkish war against the Bulgarians, which tied the hands of Disraeli conservative government. So, the Russians went to war knowing England's reluctance and guaranteeing the benevolent neutrality of Austria, which they promised Bosnia and Herzegovina, this promise came from the Russian ambassador to Istanbul Nikola Ignat'yev,<sup>2</sup> who was the main representative of Russian politics in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> The efforts of the Albanians continued with the Albanian League of Prizren held on June 10, 1878.<sup>4</sup>

The Albanian League of Prizren, had several causes which formed in protest by the Albanian people against unorthodox aggression: 1. The fact that only a small number of the Ottoman army remained in Albania during the Russo-Turkish War; 2. Fear of Slavs, Neighbors (Greeks, Serbs and Montenegrins); 3. The enlargement of Montenegro to the detriment of Albania, etc., was just some of the causes that led to the organization of this League.<sup>5</sup> The Berlin Congress was also approaching, while the Kosovo Vilayet served as a shield of Europe because the centuries-old indigenous presence of Albanians prevented the penetration of Orthodox populations into the Adriatic and Mediterranean seas.<sup>6</sup> The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century is one of the most sensational periods of incessant uprisings, which were essentially a continuation of the centuries-long struggle against the patient hands injustices of Freedom and Independence.<sup>7</sup>

But even after the Albanian League of Prizren, there were continued efforts, and it is worth noting the Albanian National Movement which supported the Macedonian Ilinden uprising supported by the Vlach and Albanian peoples, this uprising had the motto "Long live the freedom and brotherhood of the Macedonian nationalities. ", who on August 2-3, 1903, managed to liberate Krushevo and proclaim it a Republic, even though its lifespan was short only ten days, which was extinguished by the Ottoman forces led by Bahtijar Pasha, who with his army managed to bring this region under control. The Battle of Ilinden showed the people of the Balkans what they were

1 Hagen Schulze, *States Nations, and Nationalism*. From the Middle Ages to the Present, Wiley-Blackwell; Reprint edition (March 6, 1998), 256.

2 Alan John Percivale. *Taylor, the Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 242.

3 Gazmend Rizaj, "Shqipëria dhe Shqiptarët në planet sekrete të shteteve ballkanike gjatë shekullit XIX", Koha ditore, e mërkurë 22 shkurt 2006.

4 *Historia e Popullit Shqiptarë II*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, (Tiranë: Toena, 2002), 312-313.

5 Skender Rizaj, *Lidhja Shqiptare e Prizrenit në dritën e burimeve autentike*, Dritë e re për Kryetarin e parë të Shqipërisë Etnike, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës-dega e historisë, 2002), 9-65.

6 Skender Rizaj, *Kosova dhe Shqiptarët dje, sot dhe nesër*, Akademia e Intelektualëve Shqiptarë e Shkencave dhe e Arteve- sesioni i shkencave historike, (Prishtinë: 1992), 10-11.

7 Sadullah Brestovci, "Idriz Seferi- Kreshniku i Karadakut", Rilindja: Prishtinë, fejton 11-30 janar 1970, nr. 1.

dealing with.<sup>8</sup>

Then begin the Albanian uprisings that were organized as a result of the agreement between Austria-Hungary and Russia on the reforms in the so-called Macedonian Vilayets of October 24, 1903 known as Mirçshteg's reforms for Macedonia.<sup>9</sup>

The Ottoman Empire had agreed to undergo reforms, but later opposed them, the Sultan accepted the Austro-Hungarian mission, in spite of it urging Albanians and Serbs to oppose the Mirçshteg agreement, on the basis of this agreement Albanian neighbors thought the Austro-Hungarians were alongside the Albanians, where in Prizren the Serbian military authorities behaved badly with the Austro-Hungarian consul Oskar Prohaska.<sup>10</sup> The event of Austrian-Hungarian consul in Prizren, Oscar Prohaska and its development as a problem of international politics is closely linked to the context of military and diplomatic developments in the Balkans and Europe, respectively, to the Austro-Hungarian, Serbian rivalry and Russians over the legacy of European Turkey, namely Albania, Macedonia and Sandzak, territories that Turkey was forced to vacate and remain under Slavic clutches.<sup>11</sup>

The Agreement on European Turkey, which provided for these reforms to take place only in the Christian-populated vilayets and in the Albanian territories on behalf of the Christian population, which provided for the establishment of two control committees: one for the control of the authorities in the the implementation of reforms and the other for the reorganization of the gendarmerie.<sup>12</sup> This reform program was also presented to the English Government and Edward Gray, the latter was Minister in the English Government, while the members of the committee were Henry Reiter, Myler von Roghei of Austria and Nicholas Demerik of Russia, who supported these reforms and was in favor of appointing a Governor for Macedonia and influencing a number of vilayets.<sup>13</sup>

This project the Sultan forced to accept, under the pressure of the Great Powers, as a program that envisaged some reforms in the Thessaloniki and Kosovo's vilayets of Christian inhabited territories of Albanian nationality.<sup>14</sup>

In the context of these reforms, the interests of Albanians, who express their dissatisfaction with various objections of employees, the failure to pay the ever-increasing taxes, refusing to serve the Turkish military and even through the organization of civil disobedience, by protests, up to the armed rebellion.<sup>15</sup> The Albanian National Movement realized that Russia, Serbia and Bulgaria intended to carry out reforms on behalf of the Slav population even in areas inhabited by Albanians, or by majority Albanians, but without mentioning Albanians, because at that time they could not justify territorial claims towards a nation such as the Albanians], thereby eliminating the existence

8 Zekeria Cana, *Popullsia shqiptare në kapërcyell të shekullit XX*, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1990), 20-24.

9 Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Twentieth Century*, Vol. II, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90-94.

10 Sylë Ukshini, *Prapaskena e ngjarjes së konsullit Austro-Hungarez Oskar Prohaska në Kosovë*, Vjetar, (Prishtinë: Arkivi i Kosovës, 2007), nr. XXXVII-XXXVIII, 181-210.

11 Sylë Ukshini, *Prapaskena e ngjarjes së konsullit Austro-Hungarez Oskar Prohaska në Kosovë*, Vjetar, (Prishtinë: Arkivi i Kosovës, 2007), nr. XXXVII-XXXVIII, 181-210.

12 Emin Pllana, *Kosova dhe Reformat në Turqi*, (Prishtinë: Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978), 191.

13 Emin Pllana, *Kosova dhe Reformat në Turqi*, (Prishtinë: Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978), 191.

14 Shukri Rahimi, *Lufta e Shqiptarëve për Autonomi (1897-1912)*, Enti i teksteve dhe i mjeteve mësimore i KSAK, (Prishtinë: Rilindja, 1978). 115

15 Shukri Rahimi, *Gjurmime historike të Rilindjes Kombëtare*, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1986), 166-167.

of the Albanians, so the Albanians are determined to oppose the goals of the reforms.<sup>16</sup>

**Ottoman Reforms in the Territory of Albania** - Gate wished, under the guise of reforms, using the moral support of the great powers, to reorganize the administrative-police power and suppress the movement, to extend its rule in these areas.<sup>17</sup> The Ottomans fought the Albanian uprising, thinking that the Albanian national movement was suppressed once and always, but on the contrary, Kosovo Albanians continued their uprising against the Sultan, causing problems at the High Gate several times, as in 1899, 1908, and 1910.<sup>18</sup> Why did we single out the uprising in Kosovo? ... because the political and military circumstances of the time we are talking about are precisely in the Vilayet of Kosovo,<sup>19</sup> so we must to approach this reality and the ACL's efforts scientifically based on archival sources, which feature the gathering of Albanian insurgents in Ferizaj July 1908, then the Battle of Kaçanik April 30, 1910, etc.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding the reforms in the Vilayet of Kosovo, the two Slavic states Bulgaria and Serbia also expressed interest, one with its interests towards Kosovo and the other to return the lost territories.<sup>21</sup>

The interest of Serbia for the Albanians and Turks was to tear apart and weaken the Ottoman Empire, in order to make it easier to realize its aspirations for occupation of Albanian lands and to secure access to sea. Russia had the same goal, which demanded from the Gate to kill the Albanian resistance with blood, as evidenced by the historian Shukri Rahimi in Albanological Investigations, quoting the newspaper "Drita" where two goals of Russia are presented: 1). Weakening and annihilation of Albanians; and 2). Weakening of Turkey's military power and deepening of the contradictions between the two parties. They had demanded earlier that the Sandzak of Prizren, to return to Kosovo again which had joined the Sandzak of Monastery in 1880 with Serbia's intentions being to take control of the Kosovo Vilayet including all the sandzaks.<sup>22</sup>

The project of Austro-Russian reform and generally foreign intervention in the Albanian territories gave a new push to the Insurgent Movement in Albania.<sup>23</sup>

The aim of the insurgents was to secure Albania's autonomy and to oppose the implementation of partial reforms, the withdrawal of the Ottoman army from Kosovo, and the release of political prisoners.<sup>24</sup> In addition to these demands, the Albanian patriots informed the State Commission

16 Shukri Rahimi, *Çështja Shqiptare gjatë viteve 1903-1904*, Gjurmime albanologjike- seria e shkencave historike, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 1975) nr. III- 1973, 49-64.

17 Shukri Rahimi, *Çështja Shqiptare gjatë viteve 1903-1904*, Gjurmime albanologjike- seria e shkencave historike, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik, 1975) III- 1973, 50.

18 *Platformë për zgjidhjen e çështjes kombëtare shqiptare*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, (Tiranë: Shkenca, 1998) 6-10.

19 Shukri Rahimi, *Vilajeti i Kosovës më 1878-1912*, (Prishtinë: Enti i teksteve dhe i mjeteve mësimore i KSAK-së, 1969) 119-128.

20 *Arkivi i Kosovës*, Fondi Sadulla Brestovci, K. 14, d. 4, p. 1-2.

21 Skender Rizaj, *Disa dokumente serbe mbi reformat administrative në Vilajetin e Kosovës në gjysmën e dytë të shek. XIX dhe në fillim të shek. XX*, Vjetar, (Prishtinë: Arkivi i Kosovës, 1974) VI-VII, 99-110.

22 Skender Rizaj, *Disa dokumente serbe mbi reformat administrative në Vilajetin e Kosovës në gjysmën e dytë të shek. XIX dhe në fillim të shek. XX*, Vjetar, (Prishtinë: Arkivi i Kosovës, 1974) VI-VII, 99-110.

23 *Historia e Popullit Shqiptarë II*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, (Tiranë: Toena, 2002), 312-313.

24 *Historia e Popullit Shqiptarë II*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, Instituti i Historisë, (Tiranë: Toena, 2002), 312-313. *Programi i lëvizjes kombëtare u paraqit në Revistën "Albania nr. 2" në Londër 1904, të cilën e botoi Faik Konica; po të njëjtin program e paraqet edhe Shukri Rahimi në GJA SSHH, nr. III-1973, Prishtinë 1975, 54.*



and Hilmi Pasha that they did not fight against this reforms, but against the fragmentation of their country, (which was endangered by Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria), at the same time they demanded the official recognition of the Albanian nationality, the right to open Albanian schools, the appointment of Albanian employees and so on.<sup>25</sup>

Although the national movement did not lack the efforts of the Albanian Muslim Jews supported by the Gate to maintain their supremacy against the peasant population, nevertheless these movements were essentially directed against the interventions of the Great Powers, especially Austria-Hungary and Russia, as well as against remnants of Albanian lands below Macedonian borders.<sup>26</sup> Albanian insurgents had no religious goals or divisions, they say “all Albanians residing in old Albania, regardless of Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim religion, are Albanian brothers and have the same goal towards our homeland. This party was served by the Frasheri brothers who were Muslims, whose only ideal was the salvation of Albania, and the same purpose was served by Ismail Qemajli, Hoxha Kadri Prishtina, Isa Boletini, Idriz Seferi, Bajram Curri and Ibrahim Temo.<sup>27</sup>

These figures of the national movement did not belong to the Catholic faith, but do not mean that they were in favor of the Ottoman Empire, since the loss of Albania was the loss of all Albanians regardless of religion. Their concerns were that only Albanians were excluded from any participation in the new reform organization because it was well known that the interests of Austria-Hungary and Russia were not the advancement of the Albanian nation, but the influence on the Balkans and Albania was their only interest, these goals were well investigated by Albanians.<sup>28</sup>

The establishment of the secret committee “For the Freedom of Albania” (1905-1908), which was not the only one, preceded the events of the time and took over the organization of Albanian gangs during 1906-1907.<sup>29</sup> In a report sent by the Albanian uprising from the Albanian mountains to Nikola Ivanaj to the “Hope of Albania” newspaper, in Ragusa with this letter: “All Albanian patriotic vigilantes, our friends and all others who care about the cause of Albania, and especially the foreigners who are our friends: I, along with many of my friends (washing homes, families and all our possessions), have gone out into the mountains as insurgents against the government for the freedom of Albania.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Turkish government gives us no rights, no freedom and no school in the Albanian language, nor security for the lives and wealth of our people, while on the other hand the government demands and highlights the various heavy payments not only by levying taxes but also by plundering mercenaries.<sup>31</sup> Through this letter, the “Committee for the Freedom of Albania” sets out the purpose of what the weapons were in their hands, even describing the situation in Albania and throughout the Balkans as very bad which was under Turkey, but as is the case in Istanbul itself,

25 Shukri Rahimi, *Lufta e Shqiptarëve për Autonomi (1897-1912)*, Enti i teksteve dhe i mjeteve mësimore i KSAK, (Prishtinë: Rilindja, 1978) 116; *Historia e Shqipërisë II*, (Tiranë: 1965), 271.

26 *Në Gjurmë të Historisë Shqiptare II*, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë, 2003), 213-214.

27 Kujtim Nuro, *Toleranca dhe harmonia e fesë islame te shqiptarët faktor i rëndësishëm për çështjen kombëtare*, Univers – Revistë shkencore kulturore, (Tiranë: Instituti shqiptar i mendimit dhe i qytetërimit islam, 2001) 1/ 2001, 125-136.

28 *Aktet e Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, d. 96, Memorandum drejtuar Fuqive të Mëdha me kërkesë për zbatimin e reformave në Shqipëri, (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë, 1978), 153-157.

29 Ramiz Abdyli, *Lëvizja Kombëtare Shqiptare 1908-1910*, libri 1, (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2004), 13.

30 Arkivi Qendrorë Shtetëror i Shqipërisë-Tiranë, më tej (A.Q.SH.), Leter e nënshkruar nga Çerçiz Topulli, F.44, D.4, viti 1907. p. 47.

31 A.Q.SH. F.44, D.4, viti 1907. p. 47

where there are thousands of thieves who, in the name of Sultan Abdyl Hamit II, rob people and imprison them in vain and often condemn them.<sup>32</sup> Taking our sons soldiers and sending them to Istanbul, robbing merchants, not opening schools in Albanian were some that forced us to oppose them, “because only of civilization and the progress of Albanians will benefit Turkey itself ..., these d many others forced us to climb the mountains: for freedom and for the salvation of Albania and the Albanian people. There is nothing sweeter in life than efforts for freedom for the motherland. And only freedom is the lot and the charm to revive Albania.”<sup>33</sup>

On St. George’s Day (which is celebrated by all Muslim and Christian Albanians, will spark the general uprising for the freedom of Albania, spreading from the borders of Greece to Montenegro and from Thessaloniki to Serbia), this announcement is made on behalf of 3000 Albanian insurgents of the Committee for Freedom of Albania signed by Cerciz Topulli.<sup>34</sup>

This committee was at the forefront of movements where the Albanian population had begun to oppose the Ottoman administration because heavy taxes had hit the Albanian population, even in dire economic straits, which attacked the Ferizaj grain depot, this movement was evident in Novi Pazar, Pristina, Vucitrn, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Ferizaj, Peja, Gjakova etc, the center where secret meetings were held where the population and the party opposed the reforms.<sup>35</sup> In addition to this committee, several new Young Turks committees were established in some of the Kosovo, Bitola, Shkodra and Ioannina centers. The Young Turks organization was founded at the end of the century. XIX, against the absolutism of Sultan Abdyl Hamid II, aimed at restoring the constitution of 1876. Young Turks managed to turn national war scenes into a peace center in the Balkans under the umbrella of the July 1908,<sup>36</sup> Revolution Young Turks committees operated in Resen, Ohrid, Prespa, Skopje, Mitrovica, Ferizaj, Prizren. etc., at the head of these were the Albanian patriots, who had indirect links with the Albanian Committee “For the Freedom of Albania”.<sup>37</sup>

The committee “Union and Progress” included Albanian patriots such as: Ibrahim Temo,<sup>38</sup> Ismail Qemali, Dervish Hima, Hoxha Kadri Prishtina, etc.<sup>39</sup>

Regarding the Albanian secret organizations this is confirmed by the reports of the Austro-Hungarian consul who informs his state about the issue of disarmament of Albanians in Gjilan, Presevo, Kacanik, Kumanovo, etc. For whom he thought he was serving Serbian and Russian interests, he found it necessary to organize gendarmerie in these areas as well as to stop the movements against Austria-Hungary. In the reform areas of Albanian nationality where the representatives of Austria-Hungary and Italy were in charge, reforms were not implemented because the Albanian population strongly opposed these reforms, even through frequent protests and actions.<sup>40</sup> From

32 A.Q.SH. F.44, D.4, viti 1907. p. 48

33 A.Q.SH. F.44, D.4, viti 1907. p. 48

34 A.Q.SH. F.44, D.4, viti 1907. p. 48

35 Emin Pllana, *Kosova dhe Reformat në Turqi*, (Prishtinë: Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978), 205.

36 Mehmet Hacisalihoglu, *Die Jungturken und die Mazedonische Frage(1890-1918)*, Sudosteuropaische Arbeiten, (R.Oldenburger: Verlag Munchen, 2003), 162-163.

37 Ramiz Abdyli, *Lëvizja Kombëtare Shqiptare 1908-1910*, libri 1, (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2004), 13.

38 Ibrahim Temo ishte njëri ndër themeluesit e komitetit “Bashkim e Përparim”, cfr Kristaq Prifti , Dr. Ibrahim Temo- Jeta dhe Vepra 1865-1945, (Prishtinë: Enti i mjeteve dhe i tektseve i Kosovës, 1996)

39 Aliriza Selmani, *Rrethi i Gjilanit në Revolucionin Xhonturk( Tubimi i Ferizajt 5-23 Korrik 1908)*, Kosova, , (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë) nr. 31/32, 179-191.

40 Shukri Rahimi, *Gjurmime historike të Rilindjes Kombëtare*, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1986), 169-173.

an Anti-Reformist Movement the Albanians turned this into a Liberation Movement which was against the claims of the Great Powers, which were able to completely wipe out a nation only in order to achieve its interests for their influence in the Balkans, the leaders of the Albanian National Movement had national goals that would be achieved with great commitment, while the movement itself had a purely political, economic, social, but also military character.<sup>41</sup> Injustice to the Albanian people had been done by the Great Powers as early as the Congress of Berlin where the cleavage of the Albanian lands began, where these conflict-prone powers consciously crushing the Ottoman Empire ruthlessly shook the Albanian lands which were given to the Balkan countries, such as Montenegro, Serbia and Greece.<sup>42</sup> The Albanian people, unfortunately to this day, are suffering the consequences of this injustice driven by the Great Powers and supported by the neighboring states of Albania, with this problem continued even at the Conference of Ambassadors in London, even during World War I and World War II.<sup>43</sup>

**Protests of Albanians and Young Turks** - Albania was one of the most strategic territories in the Balkan Peninsula because it was its center (the Balkans), which had Ottoman greed, but also Great Powers such as Austria-Hungary, Russia and England. Why should Albanians make moves to change their position within the Ottoman Empire? At the time we are referring to we think it was necessary, Turkey was weakening day by day, losing its image, while the influence of the Great Powers was rapidly increasing, and Sami Frasheri had previously designed the National Program. “*What has been what is and what will become of Albania?*”<sup>44</sup> the program that served as a guide for the National Movement on how they should act, as it was time to act, for the salvation of the Nation, because Turkey is losing its influence in the Balkans. Like all the peoples that were ruled by the Ottoman Empire, so also the Albanians were for change, but they only demanded the return of the constitution of 1876, and the recognition of the Albanian Nation as a people with equal rights within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>45</sup>

In the national movement, a whole generation of radical-minded patriots, mainly intellectuals, journalists and publishers of the Albanian press, Turkish school teachers, civil servants, public servants, professions, had begun to exert a powerful influence, coming from the bourgeoisie and from the patriotic bailiffs, but also from the small bourgeoisie of the city and village, from the small, as the press of the time stated. Representatives of this generation of intellectuals took the initiative to create a secret organization. After the meetings and discussions that the Albanians made in Debar, Elbasan, and other cities, in November 1905, at the initiative and under the leadership of Patriot Bajram (Bajo) Topulli, Deputy Director of the Turkish Gymnasium of Bitola,<sup>46</sup> a secret Albanian committee called “For the Freedom of Albania” was formed, which marked the beginning of a general national organization, not excluding the possibility of cooperation with the Young Turks.

**Young Turk Revolution** - Since the early days of the revolution, in these events the Istanbul government, conscious of the role of Albanians, sent the Turkish general, Shemsi Pasha, who was known as a “specialist for the suppression of the uprisings.” But Shemsi Pasha, by decision of the

41 Emin Pllana, *Kosova dhe Reformat në Turqi*, (Prishtinë: Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978), 208-211.

42 Petrika Thëngjilli, *Historia e Perandorisë Osmane*, (Tiranë: Libri Universitar, 1997), 246-249.

43 Petrika Thëngjilli, *Historia e Perandorisë Osmane*, (Tiranë: Libri Universitar, 1997), 246-250.

44 Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhetë*, Botimi i tretë, (Prishtinë: Dijsa, 2007)

45 Emin Pllana, *Kosova dhe Reformat në Turqi*, (Prishtinë: Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, 1978), 228-229.

46 Myzafer Bislimi, *Shqiptarët dhe Revolucioni Xhonturk*, (Shkup: Instituti i historisë nacionale, 2008), 68-69.

Young Turk Committee of the Monastery, was killed as soon as he arrived here, on July 7, 1908. Conformity of the new demands, which the Young Turks proclaimed in the early days of the July uprising, with those of the Albanian movement led to the cooperation between the Committees “*On the Freedom of Albania*”<sup>47</sup> and the Young Turks.

From the early days of the uprising the Korca secret committee supported the revolution with people and money and called on the Albanian caliphs to join the insurgency units. This act was of particular importance because the committee was affiliated with the secret “Freedom of Albania” committees of the cities of Southern Albania. With the uprising of the Young Turks joined in the early days by the Albanian Committee of Ohrid, also joined the Albanian armed militias, which responded to the call for cooperation that Ahmet Njaziu,<sup>48</sup> had addressed to them, especially Qerqiz Topulli, who had a major influence in Tuscany on July 5. Both the Albanian committees and the militias did not give up on their national program and during the talks with the Young Turks there was a request for Albanian autonomy.

In the middle of 1908 the Albanian people always noticed the weakening of the Ottoman Empire and the interference of the Great Powers in the affairs of this empire, even in the infrastructural constructions, which the Albanians saw as a threat to the European invaders and their Slavic neighbors, because there was a threat of implication of Russia through Serbia, but also of Austria-Hungary. France, England, and Russia were envious of Austria-Hungary, which increasingly extended its influence in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>49</sup> Austrian-Hungarian Consul in Mitrovica Cambaur, given the anti-Austrian disposition of Albanians in the spring of 1908 due to the conflict with the Turks, says it is regrettable in their view that power has banned pupils’ picnics Austrian-Hungarian in Ferizaj, because the Serbs had begun using this opportunity for their own purposes, especially in Mitrovica, as well as in other parts of the district, suggesting to the Muslims (Albanians) that the construction of the Sandzak railway was the only one guilty of all the new problems that did not please the Albanians.<sup>50</sup>

Ramiz Abdyli in his work “The Albanian National Movement 1908-1910”<sup>51</sup> in which he presents a report of the Austro-Hungarian consul in Vlora, who states that in August 1908 in Berat he encountered a political program of Albanians with the name “*Albania for Albanians*”<sup>52</sup> which differed from Young Turk. But the Young Turk project was also thought to serve the Albanian people because they had been promised nationality rights and the restoration of the constitutionality of 1876.

Prof. Dr. Skender Rizaj says, I quote, “The Young Turks behaved like Ottomans, whose aim was to bring about Ottoman nationality made up of Turks and other nationalities. They had specifically addressed the Albanians, who in the European part of the Empire occupied a special position among non-Turkish peoples, because 2/3 of these Albanians were of Muslim faith.”<sup>53</sup> One

47 A.Q.SH., F.44, D.4, p.47-48.

48 Misha Gleny, *Historia e Ballkanit 1804-1999*, (Tiranë: Logos-A, 2007), 215.

49 Albina Drançolli, *Edith Durham dhe Ballkani*, Vjetar, (Prishtinë: Arkivi i Kosovës, 2006) nr. XXXV-XXXVI, 139-160.

50 Gjorgje Mikiq, *Shqiptarët dhe projektet hekurudhore të Austro-Hungarisë dhe të Serbisë në Turqi në vitet 1908-1909*, *Gjurmime Albanologjike-SSHH*, (Prishtinë: IAP, 1977) nr. IV-V- 1974-1975, 137-163.

51 Ramiz Abdyli, *Lëvizja Kombëtare Shqiptare 1908-1910*, libri 1, (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2004), 54-55.

52 Ramiz Abdyli, *Lëvizja Kombëtare Shqiptare 1908-1910*, libri 1, (Prishtinë: Instituti i Historisë, 2004), 54-55.

53 Skender Rizaj, *Roli i Shqiptarëve në Revolucionin Xhonturk të vitit 1908*, Kosova, Enti i Historisë së



of the shouts of young Turks from central Albania was headlined: “O brave Albanians, my fellow countrymen, who are surrounded on all sides, externally and internally by hostile states, the good news - the choice is being broken, it is being broken the yoke of despotic power, which as earthly poison is poisoning our souls, our lives, and our country. Muslim and Christian now start joining Anadolli and Rumeli. We are seeking Parliament on behalf of our people. In order to put an end to today’s tyrannical regime that is burning our homes, extinguishing our homes and forcing our children to weep with tears, we are seeking the Constitution.”<sup>54</sup>

Albanians expressing their interest in cooperating with the Young Turks, they thought that with the overthrow of the old Turks, the position of the Albanians would be strengthened, then easier to realize their interests.<sup>55</sup> The Albanians had earlier begun the insurgent movements led by Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri, Isa Boletini, who were among the leaders of the uprising that were divided into four groups, while the fourth group that was designated for the provinces of Gjiilan, Viti, Kamenica, Kacanik, Ferizaj, Prizren, Dragash, Tetovo, Kumanovo, Presevo and Skopje were led by Idriz Seferi, Bajram Daklani, Ramë Avdyli,<sup>56</sup> Islam Spahia, Islam Pira etc.<sup>57</sup> Albanians disagreed with the rule of Abdyl Hamiti, so they supported the Young Turk movement “*Unity and Progress*.”<sup>58</sup>

The Albanian people had also created many national organizations, even in a document published in the Albanian National Renaissance Acts 1878-1912 they cited “A Call to the Albanian People to Help the Union Monastery Club,” in which they expressed the club’s stance that said this club will belong to every Albanian and will be the center of all Albania. Alongside this club were established many societies with national motives which also stimulated the national interest in the creation of an alphabet in Albanian language.<sup>59</sup> Albanian clubs attempted to stage uprisings against Sultan Hamit II’s regime; in 1908, attended by representatives of the Vilayet of Kosovo led by Idriz Seferi, Islam Pira etc, in this meeting discussed the heavy taxes levied by the Turkish government and especially the “quarter of 2.5% tax on small animals” (sheep, goats, and taxes on the entry of any different goods into the city, etc.).<sup>60</sup> The Young Turks meticulously used the support of the occupied peoples by promising those equal government and nationality rights and the restoration of constitutionality. In order to gain the support of the Albanian people, the Young Turks approached Isa Boletini who openly supported the Young Turk Revolution, namely the Union and Progress Committee.<sup>61</sup> Among the Albanians of the Vilayet of Kosovo there were three currents, which had

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Kosovës, Prishtinë 1974. p.159-194.

54 Skender Rizaj, *Roli i Shqiptarëve në Revolucionin Xhonturk të vitit 1908*, Kosova, Enti i Historisë së Kosovës, Prishtinë 1974. p.159-194.

55 Sadulla Brestovci, *Lëvizja Kombëtare Shqiptare në Kaza të Gjiilanit dhe Islam Pira 1866-1931*, Prishtinë: Rilindja, 9 qershor 1971.

56 Hysen Terziu, *Ramë Avdyli dhe Bashkëluftëtarët e tij*, (Prishtinë: Iliriku, 1997), 62-63.

57 *Arkivi i Kosovës*, Fondi Sadulla Brestovci, K. 14, Dorëshkrim i botuar si fejtון në gazetën Rilindja në 38 vazhdimë (29 maj-5 korrik 1971) fondi “*Lëvizja Kombëtare në Kazanë e Gjiilanit, Islam Pira*”, p. 21. Cfr. Sadulla Brestovci, *Lëvizja Kombëtare në Kazanë e Gjiilanit Islam Pira 1861-1931*, p. 41-42., Rol kyç në tubimin që u mbajt në Orman të Shkupit padyshim që luajti Idriz Seferi; cfr. Sadulla Brestovci, “*Idriz Seferi Kreshniku i Karadakut*” Fejtון, Prishtinë: Rilindja, 11 -30 janar 1970.

58 Hysen Terziu, *Ramë Avdyli dhe bashkëluftëtarët e tij*, (Prishtinë: Iliriku, 1997), 19-23.

59 *Aktet e Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, d. 96, Memorandum drejtuar Fuqive të Mëdha me kërkesë për zbatimin e reformave në Shqipëri, (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë, 1978), 186-191.

60 Sadulla Brestovci, *Lëvizja Kombëtare në Kazanë e Gjiilanit Islam Pira 1861-1931*, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 2008), 41.

61 Zekeria Cana, *Populli shqiptar në kapërcyell të shekullit XX*, (Prishtinë: Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, 1990), 100-101. Cfr. Tafil Boletini, *Pranë Isa Boletinit*, Kujtime 1 (1829-1916), (Tetovë: Album,

different aims towards staying in the Young Turk Revolution, most of them for the Autonomy of Albania, however, in the Assembly of Ferizaj there were currents of support for the young.<sup>62</sup>

The Young Turks thought that they would put Isa Boletini in their service but they were mistaken, because Isa Boletini quickly realized their purpose and began to lead the masses of the Albanian people in protest against them. In the fall of 1908, Ottoman forces entered in Boletini and besieged the tower of Isa Boletini, but it had investigated the intentions of the Turkish army and organized Boletini defenses with the Albanian insurgents, who led the expedition, was forced to flee Boletini.<sup>63</sup>

Immediately after the Young Turks came to power the Albanians were convinced that they had been deceived because the Young Turks did not give them the rights they had promised the Albanians in their journey; endless efforts began for Albania's freedom and independence.

### Conclusions

The Albanians made efforts for national unity in order to be united in the face of the political and military circumstances that awaited them in the wake of the flood of rule by Abdyl Hamiti II. Among the traces of events in history is undoubtedly the Assembly of Ferizaj 1908, which was organized by Albanians to oppose Ottoman reforms, and in particular the Austro-Hungarian concession to build a railway linking Sarajevo with Thessaloniki through Kosovo and Skopje.

Due to the inability to afford these high taxes they had to protest to oppose the purpose of the Young Turk power in the Albanian areas. The Secret Committee for the Freedom of Albania, which operated from 1905-1908, played a key role in this regard. It is worth noting that during 1908 the largest inter-Albanian rally was organized in Ferizaj.

### Sonuç

Arnavutlar, II. Abdil Hamiti'nin devrilmesinin ardından kendilerini bekleyen siyasi ve askeri koşullara karşı birleşmek için ulusal birlik için çabaladılar. Tarihte iz birakan olaylar arasında kuşkusuz, Osmanlı reformlarına karşı çıkmak için Arnavutlar tarafından düzenlenen 1908 tarihli Ferizaj Meclisi ve özellikle de Kosova ve Üsküp üzerinden Saraybosna'yı Selanik'e bağlayan bir demiryolu inşaatı için Avusturya-Macaristan imtiyaz bulunmaktadır.

Bu yüksek vergileri karşılayamamaları nedeniyle Arnavutluk bölgelerindeki Genç Türk yönetiminin niyetine karşı çıkmak için protesto etmek zorunda kaldılar. 1905-1908 yılları arasında faaliyet gösteren Arnavutluk Özgürlüğü Gizli Komitesi bu konuda kilit rol oynadı. 1908'de Arnavutluk'un en büyük mitinginin Ferizaj'da düzenlendiğini belirtmek gerekir.

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1996); Skënder Luarasi, *Isa Boletini*, (Tiranë: 1971); Fatmira Musaj, *Isa Boletini 1864-1916*, (Tiranë: Instituti i Historisë, 1987)

62 Ali Berisha, *Gallapi i Prishtinës II 1800-1912*, (Prishtinë: Printing press, 2009), 272-273. Cfr. dokumentin e përdorur. AD SPJ KP, 1908. Fas. I. Raportit No. PP. 809, më 7.7. 1908.

63 Fatmira Musaj, *Isa Boletini*, (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave, 2015), 62-63.

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