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THE ALBANIAN QUESTION AT THE BEGINNING OF 1920
AND THE GREEK-ALBANIAN PROTOCOL OF KAPESTITSA
(MAY 28th 1920)

The aim of this study is to situate the Greek-Albanian Protocol of Kapestitsa in a historical framework, bringing to light new facts concerning its signing and the consequences it had upon Greek-Albanian relations. However, before proceeding to an extensive examination of this protocol, we consider it necessary to give a clear account of the Albanian Question as it appeared at the beginning of 1920.

During the First World War, in August 1916, Italy occupied Northern Epirus, ostensibly for security reasons, playing upon the internal conflict within Greece and the tense relations between the Entente and the Greek government. The Italians extended their occupation to areas of Epirus which comprised part of the Greek Kingdom, moving even as far as Ioannina. At the same time, Sarraïl's French troops were occupying the Korytza district.

In order to avoid further complications, the Greek government, now cut off from the Entente, was obliged to agree to the withdrawal of both the civil and the military authorities from the areas occupied by Italy-though this was not done without protest. The situation grew very serious, especially since the Italian authorities did not confine themselves to the military occupation of these regions, but proceeded to abrogate all the Greek powers of authority, closing the Greek schools, removing Greek flags and raising Italian ones in their place. Moreover, on June 3rd 1917, the Italian commander of the Italian campaign in Albania, General G. Ferrero, proclaimed the unity and independence of Albania under the protection of the Italian King. This proclamation reflected a change in Italian policy. In 1915, in the Treaty of London, Italy had agreed to share Albania with Serbia and Greece. By 1917, however, she had no intention of doing so; the main reason being that she feared the creation of a large Southern Slavic state which might replace Austro-Hungary as her adversary in the Adriatic. Consequently, Italy was determined to put a stop to the Slavic threat by laying claim to as large as possible a part of the Adriatic coast and by creating a large Albanian area between the Slavs and the sea. After Greece had entered the war in June 1917, Venizelos succeeded in persuading the Allies that the Italian forces should vacate Southern Epirus,

though he failed to have them removed from Northern Epirus too in July 1917.

After the armistice, the Allies agreed that all the occupied territory of Albania should remain for the time being under the authority of the occupying countries, until the Peace Conference decided upon Albania's fate.

On February 3rd 1919, at the Peace Conference, Venizelos requested that Northern Epirus be annexed to Greece. He maintained that neither racial nor linguistic factors could be considered definitive criteria of nationality; the only criterion was national consciousness. He therefore proposed that a plebiscite should be conducted by an international committee¹.

France and England agreed to the Greek petition, while America proposed that only the district of Aryirokastro should be given to Greece, and not the Korytsa district. Italy was the only country which persistently opposed the motion, an attitude severely condemned by France and England.

In his endeavour to overcome Italy's opposition to the Greek demands, Venizelos immediately proposed negotiations with the new Italian government of Nitti and Tittoni, who had succeeded Orlando and Sonino in June 1919. In the face of America's hostility with regard to certain matters vital to Italy in the Adriatic (the Fiume Question), and also because they were afraid of finding themselves cut off owing to the serious disagreements between themselves and the Allies regarding the Turkish Question, the Italians accepted Venizelos' proposal of negotiations. The talks between Venizelos and Tittoni ended in a general agreement, which was signed in Paris on July 29th 1919. In this agreement, Italy undertook to support the Greek claims in Northern Epirus and Thrace, while Greece undertook to support the unconditional annexation of Avlona to Italy and the granting of a mandate for Albania². This agreement, then, settled the Greek-Italian controversy with regard to the Albanian Question. And so, on January 13th 1920, at the official assembly of the Supreme Council of the Allies in Paris, Venizelos announced the Greek-Italian agreement. Lloyd George, Clemanceau, and Nitti agreed to accept this Tittoni-Venizelos agreement as the basis for determining the borders between Greece and Albania. It was also agreed that Italy should take all of Istria and Rijeka from Yugoslavia who, in return, would receive Northern Albania³.

This agreement appeared to open the way for the occupation of Northern

1. E. Venizelos, *Greece before the Peace Congress*, New York 1919, pp. 2-3.

2. A. Giannini, *I documenti diplomatici della pace orientale*, Rome 1922, pp. 27-30.

3. *Documents on British Foreign Policy (DBFP) 1919-1939*, First series, vol. II, London 1948, pp. 856-857, 954-955.

Epirus by the Greek army. The 8th Epirus Division was in fact planning to occupy Northern Epirus: two columns were to advance into Northern Epirus; the right-hand one through the Aaos Valley towards Premeti, and the left-hand column through the Drinos Valley towards Aryirokastro. Simultaneously with the 8th Division's advance, a battalion of 1,000 men was to land at Hagioi Saranda with a mountain battery, their primary objective the occupation of Delvinos and its surrounding district and their further aim to press on to Aryirokastro, having first joined up with the right-hand column of the Division. Correspondingly, a column of the 14th Division, starting from the Florina district, was to occupy the Korytsa district. This advance, by means of many powerful columns, would defeat and annihilate any Albanian resistance⁴. Venizelos, however, knowing President Wilson's opposition⁵, hesitated to order the army to advance, despite the appeals of the Northern Epirots. He telegraphed from London, "... though deeply saddened by the misfortune of the natives of Northern Epirus, on no account can I sanction the advance of troops until the question of Northern Epirus is finally solved or until I am authorised to do so by the Conference..."⁶.

Meanwhile, the agreement of January 13th had become known in Albania. A national congress (Panalbanian Congress) was called in Lousnia from the 28th-31st January 1920, which unanimously decided to resist foreign domination, calling for the withdrawal of the Italian army and the establishment of an independent Albanian government. The Congress decided to strip the pro-Italian government of Turhan Pasha of all power and to establish a new government led by Sulejman Delvina⁷. The new government failed to establish itself at Dyrrahio, thwarted by the Italians; it finally settled in Tirana⁸. At the same time, a national council was formed which was to take on responsibility for the struggle against the Italians⁹.

After the new Albanian government had settled in Tirana, the situation in Northern Epirus in general and in the districts of Premeti and Leskoviki in particular deteriorated to a very disagreeable extent as far as the Greek

4. *Archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (A.Y.E.)* 1920, A/5, no. 2264, Orphanidis, commander of the 8th division, Operation at Epirus, Ioannina, 25 February 1920.

5. For Wilson's objections see Great Britain State Papers, Correspondance relating to the Adriatic question, Vol. LI, London 1920, pp. 23-24 and 30.

6. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 2398, Venizelos to Foreign Ministry, London, 8 March 1920.

7. University of Tirana, *Historia e Shqipërisë (History of Albania)*, vol. II, Tirana 1965, pp. 474-476.

8. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 1932, Orphanidis to War Office, Ioannina, 14 February 1920.

9. *Historia e Shqipërisë*, p. 476.

population was concerned. The Albanian government was trying to annul the decision of January 13th. Their chief means of pursuing this end was by extracting the confession from the country's Greek element that they preferred Albanian rule to any other. But such a confession, as the Governor-General of Epirus, Achilles Kalevras, stressed in his report, "... is rejected by their Greek consciousness, and therefore pressure has been brought to bear—our people have been reduced to despair. In order not to submit to force, the defenceless Christians were brought to the grievous necessity of abandoning their homes; and so was marked the first mass-descent into our villages on this side of the frontier..."¹⁰. The Italians were unable to protect the Greek population. They remained completely inactive, not only because they had insufficient forces, but also because they perhaps had no desire to defend the Greek element¹¹. The Greek military authorities could offer no protection to the despairing cries of the Greek population¹². General Orphanidis recommended that the army go into action at once and advance and occupy Northern Epirus, wiping out any resistance which the Albanians might put up¹³. Venizelos, however, would not permit the army to advance, as the Northern Epirus question had not been definitely solved, though he was greatly distressed by the misfortunes of the population¹⁴.

At the same time, the Albanian national council entered into negotiations with the Italians with the aim of creating a completely independent Albania. For the success of this programme the national council sought the complete withdrawal of the Italians from Albanian territory and the allocation of Northern Epirus to Albania. In mid-April 1920 the Albanian-Italian negotiations ended in an agreement, as a result of which the Italians withdrew their troops from the regions of Aryirokastro, Premeti and Leskoviki, but not from Avlona and Hagioi Saranda¹⁵. Describing the entry of the Albanians into Aryirokastro, the commanding officer of the 8th Division stressed that the new Albanian government had the undivided support and assistance of the Serbs, from whom it was receiving arms, machine-guns, cannons and every kind of military equipment. The Albanians were concentrating forces around Avlona, intending to occupy the town at all costs¹⁶.

10. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 312, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 28 March 1920.

11. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 2968, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 18 March 1920.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 3415, Report of General Orphanidis, Ioannina, 7 March 1920.

14. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 3338, Venizelos to Foreign Ministry, London, 23 March 1920.

15. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 1130, Orphanidis to War Office, Ioannina, 29 April 1920.

16. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 5352, Orphanidis to War Office, Ioannina, 25 April 1920.

The Greek government protested at the Italians' withdrawal, since, according to the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement, they should have remained there until handing the area over to the Greeks. The Greek government demanded that the Italians recall their military detachments until the question was settled, but, if this were impossible, that the Italian army hand over the outpost to the Greek army. The Italians, however, stressed that this would not serve the interests of the Greek government as it would complicate the matter and would have unpleasant repercussions throughout Albania. They considered that they had not the right to proceed upon such a course of action without the agreement of the Powers, since the solution to the Albanian question was in the hands of the Conference. Moreover, they feared a general uprising in Albania if the Greek army entered Northern Epirus before the Conference reached a decision and without America's agreement¹⁷.

The Italians' position in Albania was incomprehensible. While maintaining that they had ordered the contraction of their troops in the area of Hagioi Saranda for more general reasons, at the same time, during their withdrawal, they handed over to the Albanians a great deal of military equipment¹⁸. The Italian diplomatic agent in Korytsa informed the Greeks that the Italians had evacuated Northern Epirus because Italy was unable to hand the area over to the Greeks, as this would have aroused the displeasure of the Albanians. The Greeks must occupy these regions by themselves¹⁹. Furthermore, if the Italians were to hand Northern Epirus over to the Greeks, they would first have to reinforce their military strength, which had been reduced to a shadow of its former self. And it was obvious that the Italians could not send a single regiment to Avlona. The Albanians had ceased months before to take any further notice of the Italian military occupation. After General Rivieri had been relieved by General Rossi, the Italian occupation had relaxed its grip completely, while the Albanians' nationalist demonstrations had intensified²⁰. Representatives of the Albanian government in America and Rome had particularly high hopes from President Wilson's attitude, and were sending encouraging telegrams to Aryirokastro concerning the situation with regard to the Albanian question²¹. Also, the Albanian government was keeping its prefects well-informed by means of a confidential circular, and advising them

17. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 5424, Koromilas to Foreign Ministry, Rome, 6 May 1920.

18. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 6458, Orphanidis to War Office, Ioannina, 14 May 1920.

19. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 5551, Foreign Ministry to Kalevras, Athens, 29 April 1920.

20. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 4457, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 10 April 1920.

21. *Ibid.*

to encourage the citizens by notifying them that, apart from Wilson, Albania had recently come by another sincere and powerful defender, England, in the persons of many influential members of the English Parliament. The circular stressed that England was trying to save Albania from any foreign imposition²².

At this time, England's policy with regard to the Albanian question was most obscure. While the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, supported the Greek position, other British representatives at the Peace Conference took a different stand. When, on April 1st, the French government suggested to Lord Curzon that Korytsa should be occupied by the Greeks after the withdrawal of French troops from the area, the Foreign Office was inconceivably disturbed. Allen Leeper, a Foreign Office official and a member of the British delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris, considered that such an attempt would be an utter failure from every point of view; it would become a ground for war and would obliterate all hope of a peaceful settlement. Moreover, no section of the January 13th proposal for the settling of the Adriatic question had given a greater impression of injustice or been more strongly condemned by the English press and by President Wilson than the annexation of Korytsa to Greece²³. Allen, wishing to reconcile the promises which had already been made to Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia on January 13th with the wishes of the Albanians, suggested on April 5th 1920, instead of the immediate annexation of Korytsa to Greece or of Skodra to Yugoslavia, a three-fold mandate plan. This plan would leave Avlona under the full control of Italy and Aryirokastro under the full control of Greece, while the rest of Albania would have, in the person of the League of Nations, the guarantor for her future independence. For an interval of time to be determined by the League of Nations together with the powers concerned—Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia—these three powers would act as mandatories of the League of Nations, each in the area assigned to her. Control would be exercised a) by Greece in the Korytsa area, b) by Yugoslavia in Northern Albania, and c) by Italy in the rest of Albania²⁴. According to Leeper this plan had been unofficially approved by all the parties concerned. The Albanian representatives in Paris had given their opinion of the plan and let it be understood that if it fully satisfied their demands for an independent Albania they were resolved to accept it; while, on the other hand, they would never accept the immediate annexation of

22. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, no. 6797, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 4 May 1920.

23. *D.B.F.P.*, first series, vol. XII, London 1962, p. 378.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 380-381.

Korytsa to Greece nor that of Skodra to Yugoslavia²⁵. This agreement, nevertheless, was never officially carried out in the countries concerned. The Yugoslavs were not prepared to accept it. They were aiming for an independent Albania with the 1913 frontiers and without a mandate. However, if Italy and Greece accepted parts of this land, and if Italy accepted the mandate, Northern Albania as far as the River Drino was to go to Yugoslavia as an autonomous province²⁶.

The idea of replacing the French troops in Korytsa with Greek troops was an old one. In September 1919 the matter had been discussed at the Peace Conference; at the time, the Italians were of the opinion that this would cause complications; the French, however, declared that no date had been fixed and that therefore there was no need for the matter to be discussed by the Conference²⁷. Later, at the San Remo Conference (18th-26th April 1920), it was decided that Thrace as far as the Tsatalzas line should be given to Greece²⁸. The Conference simply confirmed the preliminary decision on Thrace, which had been made on February 18th 1920²⁹.

The cession of Thrace to Greece meant that the French troops had to withdraw from Thrace, and as the French troops at Korytsa came under the same command they too had to withdraw from Korytsa. The French General B. de Fourtoul, who, at the beginning of April, had visited the Korytsa district for a review of the French troops, on his return to Constantinople informed the Greek military mission of the prevailing situation there. He confirmed the existence of a serious organisation in the Italian zone around Erseka, under the leadership of Sali Boutka; its purpose was to put up resistance to the Greek army. These bands of Albanians had at their disposal more than 20 machine-guns and two cannons. De Fourtoul thought that the force could be completely wiped out, in the event of the seizure of Korytsa, if Florina's Greek Division acted in combination with the 8th Division and took them by surprise. This surprise action on the part of the Florina Division would cut all distance to nothing. Concerning the attitude of the citizens of Korytsa in 1920, he had found it very different from what it was in 1916 and 1918 when he had previously visited the town. Then the majority of the inhabitants had had very pro-Greek sentiments, whereas now he had verified

25. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

26. Ivo Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference*, New Haven, Conn, 1963, p. 285.

27. *D.B.F.P.*, first series, vol. I, London 1947, pp. 609, 761.

28. *D.B.F.P.*, first series, vol. VIII, London 1958, p. 117.

29. *D.B.F.P.*, first series, vol. VII, London 1958, pp. 121-122.

that the attitude of many of them had changed. This he ascribed to: 1) the confidence inspiring the government of Dyrrahio in 1920, which they saw as a national Albanian government, as opposed to the preceding one, which was considered to be pro-Italian and prepared to hand over Avlona; 2) to the machinations of the Italians who had presented the Entente to the citizens as being unsympathetic to their wishes; and 3) to Wilson's official announcement that he wanted Albania to be independent and to include Korytsa. De Fourtou also expressed his admiration for the progress he had observed and for the excellent administration of Western Macedonia and the prefecture of Florina, a sentiment which he communicated to French officers also. The chief of staff, Boucher, added that such an administration constituted the best propaganda for the Greeks' national desires. Finally, the General stated his conviction that the areas taken by the Greeks would certainly prosper and would be compensated for the bad Turkish administration under which they had hitherto suffered³⁰.

At the beginning of May 1920, the French government informed the Greeks that the French army would soon be withdrawing from the Korytsa district. However, if the Greek government were to come to an understanding with the Italians, such that Korytsa was seized by the Greek army, the French could only approve this action³¹. Faced with this problem, the Greek government decided that Korytsa would be occupied by the Greek army and, in accordance with the French government's suggestion, asked the opinion of the Italian government. Also, they asked the French to postpone their withdrawal from Korytsa for a short time, so that the Greeks would have time to prepare the advance of their troops³². Although in one year the French had several times deferred the withdrawal of their army, Millerant, the Prime Minister of France, agreed to allow the French army to remain for one week, so that the advance could be prepared and the Greeks could have the chance to reach an understanding with the Italians³³. Nor did Field Marshal Foch have any objection to the extension of the French army's stay in Korytsa³⁴.

30. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 4816, Colonel G. Katehakis to War Office, Constantinople, 16 April 1920.

31. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, Korytsa, no. 5218, Embassy at Paris (Romanos) to Foreign Ministry, Paris, 3 May 1920.

32. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, Korytsa, no. 5218, Foreign Ministry to Romanos (Paris) and Koromilas (Rome), Athens, 5 May 1920.

33. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5760, Romanos to Foreign Ministry, Paris, 13 May 1920.

34. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5445, Romanos to Foreign Ministry, Paris, 7 May 1920.

A governmental crisis in Italy prevented the Italian government from giving an immediate answer to the matter of the occupation of Korytsa. On May 17th 1920, the Italians informed Koromilas firmly that they could not officially announce that they supported the seizure of Korytsa, but that unofficially they had no objection to the occupation of the district by the Greek army³⁵. While the Greek government was preparing the advance of the army to Korytsa, on May 18th General Franchet d'Esperay warned the Greek ambassador, Romanos³⁶, that it was quite impossible for the French army to be kept at Korytsa for more than two or three days, thereby arousing great agitation in Athens. Venizelos immediately sent the following telegram to Romanos:

“From priority telegram received today I learn that in two or three days the Korytsa district is to be evacuated. We need at least eight more days in order to be able to send necessary forces for occupation. I beg therefore, if Pogradets and Kazas Starovou—in which we have no interest—are evacuated at once, that the withdrawal from Korytsa be postponed for eight or ten days, so that we shall be able to send the necessary forces for occupation. I am sure the French government will not refuse us this valuable service”³⁷. Millerant did indeed agree to Venizelos' request and gave a final extension, to which the War Office also agreed³⁸. On May 19th, the French chief of staff telegraphed to the General Allied Headquarters in Constantinople that if the withdrawal of the Korytsa battalion had not yet begun, it must be postponed for ten days, that is until May 28th, so that the Greek army would be given time to take over from the French. The chief of staff stressed that if by any chance the French had withdrawn from Korytsa before the telegram was received, they should continue their march in accordance with their previous orders. But in order to avoid this eventuality, the chief of staff authorised the Greek government urgently to inform the commander of the Korytsa battalion that the telegram had been despatched to Constantinople, and to tell him to postpone the withdrawal until he received this telegram³⁹. On May 21st, the Greeks,

35. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5891, Koromilas to Foreign Ministry, Rome, 17 May 1920. Also, no. 6446, Venizelos to Kalevras, Athens, 28 May 1920.

36. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5909, Romanos to Foreign Ministry, Paris, 18 May 1920.

37. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5909, Venizelos to Romanos, Athens, 18 May 1920.

38. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5949, Romanos to Foreign Ministry, Paris, 18 May 1920.

39. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5994, Romanos to Foreign Ministry, Paris, 19 May 1920. Also, Muin Çami (editor) *Lufta e Popullit Shqiptar për çlirimin kombëtar (The struggle*

through the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio Iakovos—who had been in Korytsa since the middle of 1919—informed the French commander of Korytsa, Crétin, of the French chief of staff's telegram⁴⁰. Crétin told the Archbishop that he had received no order yet. However, he immediately sent a French officer to Thessaloniki, who, two days later, brought the confirmation⁴¹.

The ten-day extension of the French army's stay in Korytsa enabled the Greek government to assemble a mixed brigade consisting of two infantry regiments and one mountain battery under the command of Major-General N. Trikoupis. This brigade was to muster in Florina. The occupation of Korytsa had to be accomplished before the French left the town, in other words no later than May 28th. While the brigade was being assembled, Venizelos sent a telegram on May 23rd to Metropolitan Iakovos through the prefect of Florina, saying that: "a mixed brigade of our troops under Major-General Trikoupis is to take possession of Korytsa next Friday, following the French withdrawal. Civilian representative of the government has been appointed, Mr Iliakis, governor-general of Western Macedonia. It must be announced to everyone that our troops are not coming as conquerors; they are coming simply to replace the retiring French troops who, from Greek troops and Greek authorities, took over Korytsa three years ago: they are to await the decision of the Conference and will comply with it. Therefore, they are not going to replace existing authorities, but will permit them to continue to carry out their functions under the control of the civilian representative of the government. I ask you particularly to advise our people there not to adopt an aggressive attitude, but on the contrary to show themselves most friendly in the face of any antagonism"⁴². From these instructions of Venizelos', it is clear that the Greek government had no intention of occupying the Korytsa district permanently; the Greeks were to replace the French until the Conference decided on Korytsa's fate.

The regiments of the mixed brigade arrived by rail in Florina on the evening of May 25th⁴³. The 36th Florina infantry regiment was also there, having

of the Albanian people for the national liberation), vol. II, Tirana 1976, p. 285.

40. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 5994, Foreign Ministry to Grigoriou (Prefect of Florina), Athens, 20 May 1920.

41. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6190, Grigoriou to Foreign Ministry, Florina, 23 May 1920, Çami, Lufta e Popullit Shqiptar, p. 329.

42. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6130, Venizelos to Metropolitan of Dyrrahio Iakovos, Athens, 23 May 1920.

43. N. Trikoupis, *Διοικήσεις μεγάλων μονάδων εν πολέμω* (Commands of large units at war), Athens 1934, pp. 95-96.

received orders to supply the brigade with food and to give it every support. In the evening, Trikoupis sent a telegram to the War Office informing them that on the morning of May 26th he would head for the Albanian border and that the brigade would be in Korytsa on the morning of May 28th, when the French troops would withdraw⁴⁴. But before the mixed brigade began its advance, on the evening of May 25th, confidential instructions from Venizelos to Trikoupis forbade any advance beyond the border-line set by the Protocol of Florence, without further orders. The telegram stressed that only on Thursday morning (May 27th) would the government be able to come to a definite decision⁴⁵. Trikoupis was considerably displeased by this attitude of Venizelos's, as he did not want to delay the advance. Iliakis, the governor-general of Western Macedonia, agreed with Trikoupis, and telegraphed to Venizelos: "I agree with the general that to delay the advance will have disastrous consequences. All have been arranged in time for an effortless advance on the part of our troops. Tomorrow I shall be in Florina after I have arranged things here. Complete calm prevails. I consider we should avail ourselves of the effect a rapid advance would make"⁴⁶. Despite the objections of Trikoupis and Iliakis, the mixed brigade, in accordance with Venizelos' instructions, did not proceed beyond the frontier-line.

On May 24th, the commander of the French troops in Korytsa, lieutenant-colonel Crétin, informed the Albanians of the impending occupation of the town by the Greeks, after the withdrawal of the French. This news aroused great agitation amongst the Albanians. The Council of Notables assembled at once and made an urgent decision to invite representatives from the surrounding villages to think of how their resistance was to be organised. According to a telegram from Metropolitan Iakovos, "French officers interested in encouraging Albanian resistance are saying that the Greeks are occupying Korytsa as D. Anunzio occupied Fiume. At their head is the famous Vote⁴⁷. Therefore the Albanians are threatening to move heaven and earth. Their present dominant idea is resistance, but it is to be hoped that they will reconsider their decision so that the current of peace will continue to increase. It is said that tomorrow, when those from the villages assemble, permission will be requested to organise a mass-meeting..."⁴⁸.

44. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6321, Trikoupis to War Office, Florina, 25 May 1920.

45. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6268, Venizelos to Trikoupis, Athens, 25 May 1920.

46. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6357, Iliakis to Venizelos, Kozani, 26 May 1920.

47. Retired French officer who had stayed at Koritsa as a businessman after his retirement from the French army.

48. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 6388, Metropolitan of Dyrrahio Iakovos to Foreign Ministry, Florina, 25 May 1920.

Meanwhile, the Albanian government in Tirana had unofficially sent the Minister of Communications, Esref Fraseri, to Korytsa at the end of April, with the aim of leading the area's nationalist movement. Fraseri, as representative of the Tirana government, informed the government of the situation prevailing in Korytsa and requested military aid. But Tirana could not help. The Tirana government was trying to muster its own forces in order to confront the Esatist movement, which was threatening the existence of the government itself, at the very time that the struggle against the Italians was to begin in Avlona⁴⁹. The Albanians tried to muster forces from the surrounding villages; in the organisation of the undisciplined Albanians the leading part was played by the former French Lieutenant Vote, who continued to wear French military uniform, although he had been demobilised about a year before⁵⁰.

On May 26th the Albanian flag was raised in Korytsa and the district came under the administration of the Tirana government. The Council of Notables, which represented the people of Korytsa, placed the governing of the district in the hands of Esref Fraseri, the representative of the Albanian government⁵¹. Fraseri, in accordance with the instructions of the Tirana government, asked the people to remain calm and obedient to the orders and laws of the government, stressing that the security of the property, the life and the honour of every citizen, whatever his religion, was guaranteed⁵². Immediately after the administrative union, Fraseri and the rest of the Albanians asked Crétin to hand over to them the administration of the district. The French commander not only refused to recognise the new régime, since he had instructions to hand the town over to the Greeks, but he also threatened to take military steps. Finally, the Albanians decided to wait until Crétin received further instructions⁵³.

After Trikoupis had received Venizelos' telegram on May 25th, which forbade any advance beyond the border without further orders, the mixed brigade established outposts on the heights between Viglitsa and Kapestitsa. The headquarters were stationed at Smardesi, where Trikoupis awaited

49. Muin Çami, "Protokolli Shqiptaro-Grek i Kapshticës (The Albanian-Greek Protocol of Kapestitsa), *Studime Historike*, Tirana no. 4, 1975, pp. 76-77.

50. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 8336, Confidential Report of the XIV division to War Office, Serres, 2 June 1920.

51. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7621 Iliaki's report to Foreign Ministry, Kozani, 12 June 1920. Attached proclamation of the Council of Notables, Koritsa, 26 May 1920.

52. *Ibid.*, proclamation of Fraseri, Koritsa, 26 May 1920.

53. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6742, Metropolitan of Dyrrahio Iakovos to Foreign Ministry, Florina, 2 June 1920.

instructions from Venizelos. The prevailing impression in Korytsa was that the troops would advance. This prospect encouraged the Greeks, while frightening the Albanians badly. In fact, Crétin himself had the protocol for the surrender of the town ready and was preparing to meet the Greek army⁵⁴. However, on the evening of May 27th, another telegram was received from Venizelos, who repeated that "without specific authorisation, our troops must not advance to the occupation of Korytsa, but must go no further than the border laid down by the Protocol of Florence, as I notified you in my earlier telegram"⁵⁵.

The question is: what power, what necessity enforced, instead of the immediate occupation of Korytsa, the signing of the Kapestitsa agreement? Until very recently this point had still not been sufficiently clarified. However, with the data now at our disposal we are able to explain it with certainty. As has already been mentioned, the French and Italian governments had no objection to the occupation of Korytsa by the Greek army. On May 25th 1920, however, on the very day that he ordered Trikoupis not to cross the border, Venizelos deemed it advisable to ask the opinion of the English government as well:

"Upon the withdrawal of French troops from Korytsa next Friday, we have been informed by the French government that if we wish we may re-occupy the town, bearing in mind that French troops received it from us three years ago. I beg you urgently to ask the Foreign Office if it has any objection to the town's re-occupation, and to send an answer immediately by express telegram as, if necessary, we shall have to stop the movement of our troops towards occupation. I beg you to make the request tomorrow, Wednesday, and to send me your answer the same day, as otherwise it will be difficult for us to stop the re-occupation in time"⁵⁶.

The English did not reply at once. Lord Hardinge, head of the Greek Department of the Foreign Office, was of the opinion that there would be no objection to the occupation of Korytsa, but declared that he could not give an answer without asking the Foreign Secretary⁵⁷. The next day—May

54. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7308, letter of Ch. Iliopoulos, medical doctor inhabitant of Koritsa to Adamidis, deputy of Koritsa, Koritsa, 30 May 1920.

55. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, unnumbered, Venizelos to Iliakis and Trikoupis, Athens, 27 May 1920.

56. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6257, Venizelos to Kaklamanos (Embassy at London), Athens, 25 May 1920.

57. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6420, Kaklamanos to Venizelos, London, 26 May 1920.

27th—the English government replied that it did not advise the occupation of Korytsa, as it believed that this would stir up the Albanians and create a great many difficulties for the Greeks⁵⁸. On receiving this advice from the English government, Venizelos decided that the Greek army would not occupy Korytsa⁵⁹. Informing Lord Curzon of this, Venizelos stressed that, “out of respect for the advice of the English government, we have suspended any further advance of our army, which is within twentyfour hours’ march of Korytsa and was to have entered the town tomorrow when the French withdrew...”⁶⁰. At this time, the Albanian question was a frequent subject of discussion in English political circles. One friend and vigorous defender of Albania was Lord Robert Cecil, who was also the chairman of a committee which had undertaken the examination of matters of foreign policy. This committee immediately discussed the Albanian question too. The creation was demanded of an independent Albania with the borders of 1913. In the middle of May, powerful members of the English Parliament also asked the English government to take action so that the League of Nations would guarantee the independence of the Albanian state⁶¹. The English interest in Albania was due to the fact that oil had been found in Albania and the English wanted to exploit it⁶². Venizelos, knowing the great English interest in Albania, had no alternative but to follow the advice of the English government and not to occupy Korytsa, as he wished to avoid any action that might damage the negotiations going on at that time, which were leading eventually to the Treaty of Sèvres. Greece’s great interests lay not in Northern Epirus but in Thrace and Asia Minor.

From all that has been said above, it seems quite clear that the main reason that the Greeks did not take Korytsa was the intervention of the English

58. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6431, Kaklamanos to Venizelos, London, 27 May 1920, Also, *D.B.F.P.*, first series, Vol. XII, p. 403. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Lord Curzon wrote... “we have warned Greek Minister here that H.M.G., cannot approve of the occupation of this territory at a moment when whole Albanian question is under consideration...”.

59. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6446, Venizelos to Kalevras, Athens, 28 May 1920.

60. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6431, Venizelos to Kaklamanos, Athens, 28 May 1920.

61. Vuk Vinaver, “Anglia dhe posita ndërkombëtare e Shqipërisë midis dy luftave botërore (England and the international position of Albania between the two World Wars), *Gjurmime Albanologjike*, Prishtina, vol. 7, no. I (1968) p. 190. *A.Y.E.* 1920, A/5, no. 6086, Embassy at Bucharest to Foreign Ministry, Bucharest, 18 May 1920.

62. For the English interest concerning Albania see Zivko Avramovski, “La Politique Anglaise envers l’Albanie 1918-1924”, *Balkanica*, Belgrade, vol. 4, 1973, pp. 325-345. Also, Venianin Toçi, *Ndërhyrja e Kapitalit te huaj në Shqipëri dhe qendrimi i qarqeve demokratike: 1921-1925* (The intervention of foreign capital in Albania and the stand of the democratic circles, 1921-1925), Tirana 1974, pp. 21-43.

government; and not the fact that Venizelos was afraid of the Albanians' resistance, as Albanian historians allege⁶³. The Albanians' resistance, whether or not it was feasible, had nothing to do with Venizelos' decision to stop the army's advance. The Greeks paid no heed to this resistance, although the French made out that it was very strong. The French considered that one regiment—for they thought that the Greeks would send only one regiment—would not suffice for this operation, but that a division would be needed⁶⁴. The Greek government, on the other hand, believed that three infantry regiments and one mountain battery would be more than enough to make any Albanian resistance give way. Various rumours that Sali Boutka, an Albanian chieftain, would stand against the Greek army with 4,000 armed men were considered to be unfounded. A certain amount of resistance was expected on the Malik bridge⁶⁵. A telegram from Florina reported that, "according to information from a reliable source in Korytsa, nervous activity has been observed among the Albanians who are assembling and holding meetings. Without reaching any decision, because most of these people—especially the peasants—are against resistance"⁶⁶.

Venizelos' decision to stop the advance of the brigade to Korytsa created serious problems for the Greek government. A way had somehow to be found

63. Çami, "Protokolli Shqiptaro-grek i Kapshticës", p. 86-88 and Myslim Islami, "Vendosmeria e popullsisë së qarkut të Korçës për të përbulluar një agresion grek në prak të luftës së Vlorës" (=The determination of the population of the Korytsa district when faced with a Greek attack on the eve of the battle of Avlona), *Kongresi i Lushnjës dhe lufta e Vlorës*, Tirana 1974, p. 199-201.

For interpretations given by Greek researchers see: A. Frangulis, *La Grèce et la Crise Mondiale*, t. 2, Paris 1926, p. 242-243. L. Maccas, *La Question Gréco-Albanaise*, Paris 1921, p. 189-190. K. Sakellaropoulos, *Ἡ Σκιά τῆς Δύσεως* (The Shadow over the West), Athens 1954, p. 379. Also L. Paraskevopoulos, *Ἀναμνήσεις* (Recollections), t. 1, Athens 1934, p. 364-365. General Paraskevopoulos wrongly reports that Venizelos gave orders that the Greek army should not cross the Greek-Albanian border because he supposedly relied on erroneous information from the commander of the 8th Division, who emphasised that the Albanians were going to resist the Greek army with all their forces. Commanding General Negrepondis, however, not only did not give Venizelos such information, but also at the beginning of June suggested that the army advance as the only solution to the Northern Epirus question. This point will be discussed further on in the text.

64. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, unnumbered, Iliakis to Foreign Ministry, Kozani, 26 May 1920.

65. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 6436, Army command at Kozani to War Office, Kozani, 27 May 1920.

66. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 6584, Gendarmarie Florinas to Ministry of the Interior, Florina, 26 May 1920.

of reaching an agreement with the Albanians, because otherwise, if the advance were stopped without this agreement, this would be put down to cowardice and would create a terrible situation for the Greeks in Korytsa; pressure would be brought to bear against them and the life of Metropolitan Iakovos himself would be in danger⁶⁷.

But while the Greeks were in this difficult position, on the afternoon of May 27th, a committee of Albanians from Korytsa, accompanied by Father Petros as the representative of Metropolitan Iakovos, and by the French officer Vote, visited general Trikoupis at Smadersi, with the request that an agreement should be reached. This committee gave Trikoupis the following letter from the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio, Iakovos:

“Korytsa 14th/27th May 1920,

Dear General,

Messrs Pan. Tsalis, Kiani Beis and N. Zoïs come for a meeting with you on behalf of the Albanian Council of this town, in the hope that you will communicate with them. It is indeed to be wished that all bloodshed be avoided by both sides, once explanations and assurances have been given. They are accompanied by the French officer M. Vote and Father Petros; this to prove that the Metropolis too is informed.

May God’s blessing be upon you”⁶⁸.

The leaders of the Albanian movement in Korytsa wanted, come what may, a means to be found of averting an armed conflict with the Greeks. For this reason they approached Metropolitan Iakovos and asked him to intercede with the Greek government so that the advance of the Greek army would be stopped and bloodshed avoided.

Trikoupis, who had received orders not to advance on Korytsa, wanted to play upon the Albanians’ proposition and declared that his orders to advance and occupy Korytsa were categorical. If, however, they persisted in their appeal, since he himself had no authority to stop the advance without higher orders from the government, they would have to go to Florina and come to some understanding with Iliakis, whom Trikoupis informed by telephone⁶⁹. And in fact the committee left at once and reached Florina at nine p.m. Meanwhile Iliakis had requested to speak to Venizelos on the telephone at ten o’clock on the evening of May 27th.

Iliakis stressed to the committee that he had every good intention of

67. *A. Y. E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7621, Iliaki to Foreign Ministry, Kozani, 12 June 1920.

68. *Ibid.*, Attached letter.

69. Trikoupis, *Διοικήσεις μεγάλων μονάδων...*, p. 101-102.

contributing towards the avoidance of bloodshed, for he believed that in the interests of both countries Greek-Albanian relations ought to be friendly. To prove his good intentions, he would take on the responsibility of stopping the army's advance, and would settle the matter with Venizelos by telephone⁷⁰. Indeed, a short time later Venizelos telephoned Iliakis and informed him as follows:

"It is by now almost certain that we shall not advance any further than the border designated in my telegram of this morning (i.e. the border marking our provisional occupation as of 1913) towards the occupation of Korytsa. But if this occupation is definitely deferred, it is essential that we turn this deferral to good account, as to assure for our people there good treatment at the hands of the Albanians. My advice, therefore, is that you come to an understanding with the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio, so that he will undertake the responsibility in the name of the Albanians to persuade us not to proceed with the occupation awaiting the decision of the Conference, while the Albanians undertake to respect our institutions in Korytsa"⁷¹.

Iliakis in reply informed the Prime Minister of the arrival of the Albanian committee in Florina, and of its assurance that the Albanian government would send representatives to Athens in order to find a solution to the Northern Epirus question. He also asked for authorisation to come to an understanding with the Albanians. Venizelos' reply to the questions concerned was as follows:

"...I authorise you to declare that as we wish to prove our desire to avoid pointless bloodshed and that our future relations should be those of good neighbours, you act in this spirit in coming to an understanding under the following terms:

1) That the Albanian government promises that none of our people living on their territory shall suffer, and that the schools and churches shall function freely. 2) That we both promise to adhere to the frontier-line laid down by the Conference. 3) That there shall be no transgression of the provisional bounds of our occupation, which must be as defined by my telegram of this morning^{71a}. I draw your attention to the fact that this line is not the one laid down by the Protocol of Florence. ...Tell the Albanians that I shall gladly welcome the representatives sent by the Albanian government to Athens so

70. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7621, Iliakis to Foreign Ministry, Kozani, 12 June 1920.

71. *Ibid.*

71a. Line which the Greeks held in 1916 before the French occupied the area. For Venizelos' telegrams of 27 May 1920 and the exact boundary line see Trikupis, *Διοικήσεις μεγάλων μονάδων...*, pp. 100-101.

that we can attempt to find a solution to the Northern Epirus question. Act as you think best. Furthermore, as it is almost certain that we shall not advance on Korytsa, it is essential that you find some way or another of reaching an agreement, and to this end, together with the major-general, you have complete freedom of action”⁷².

After his conversation with Venizelos, Iliakis informed the Albanians that the President of the Greek government agreed that they should come to an understanding and that the next day he himself would go to Kapestitsa with Trikoupis to sign the final agreement. Iliakis asked of the Albanians that the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio might also go to Kapestitsa, as all the credit for the understanding was due to him.

The members of the Albanian committee were overjoyed at this unhoped-for success (i.e. the stopping of the army’s advance) and at Iliakis’ warm reception⁷³. Immediately after the return of the committee to Korytsa, the Albanian Council assembled and decided to send the same committee to Kapestitsa with three more Albanian members. This new committee went to Kapestitsa on the evening of May 28th. There they met Iliakis and Trikoupis, whom they presented with the following authorisation: “The council of Notables of the Korytsa district, at a meeting which took place today, Friday May 28th 1920, with Mr Esref Fraseri, the representative of the government in Tirana, as chairman, has decided to send Messrs Esref Fraseri, General Director of Public Works for the government in Tirana, George Ratsis, Chairman of the Council of Notables, Pandeli Tsale, former Albanian minister, Kiani Disnitsa, member of the Council of Notables, Nikola Zoī, Director of Economic Affairs, and Captain Selahedin Blossmi, to the village of Kapestitsa on the Greek-Albanian border, with full jurisdiction provisionally to negotiate all political, military and economic matters, until such time as definite decisions are made by the Peace Conference”⁷⁴. The Greek representatives had no official power of attorney and, as Iliakis stressed, took on personal responsibility.

72. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7261, Iliakis to Foreign Ministry, Kozani, 12 June 1920.

73. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7308, Letter from Iliopoulos to Adamidis, Korytsa, 30 May 1920. In this letter, Dr. Iliopoulos stresses that “Father Petros told him in confidence that he himself was of the opinion that the Greek army would advance because a letter had been delivered to Iliakis from the Metropolitan, in which he was advised not to be misled by the Albanians, but that the army should proceed with its advance”. Unfortunately, this letter was not found amongst the records.

74. *A.Y.E.*, 1970, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7621, attached to Iliakis report, Kozani, 12 June 1920. Çami, *Lufta e Popullit Shqiptar*, p. 318.

The protocol which was to be signed had been drawn up in Greek by Iliakis; but since not everyone knew the Greek language, it was at once translated by the prefect of Florina, Grigoriou, who was also present, and signed immediately afterwards. By this protocol, the Greeks "... undertake to stop the advance in order to assist the understanding between the Greek and Albanian governments and the strengthening of good relations between the two neighbouring countries, thereby avoiding all bloodshed. And, until the whole matter is settled, either by the Conference or by a direct understanding between the Greek and Albanian governments, the Albanians on their part undertake the following obligations:

First. No Greek inhabitant of territory not occupied by the Greek army shall suffer for his convictions.

Second. The Greek schools and churches upon this territory shall operate freely.

Third. There shall be no transgression of the boundary-line held by the Greek army before the last war...

Both covenanters also promise that they will comply with the decision of the Conference on the setting of the boundary line..."⁷⁵.

After this general protocol had been signed, Iliakis asked the Albanians to sign another protocol with stipulations concerning internal matters.

1. Apart from policemen, no-one may carry arms in the towns and villages.
2. Three Greek members should be added to the Korytsa committee.
3. Provocative assemblies should be strictly forbidden.
4. Other persons inspiring trust should be added to the police-force.
5. Empty communal buildings used by the French authorities should be handed over to the community⁷⁶.

The Albanians accepted these terms, but, on the advice of the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio, it was decided not to draw up a protocol as long as the committee took on the obligation in the presence of the Archbishop to fulfil these terms. They emphasised once more that within three weeks the Albanian government would be sending representatives to Greece so that a definitive understanding could be reached⁷⁷.

It is clear that the Albanian committee was prepared to accept all the Greeks' terms in order to stop the advance of the Greek army. While the Greeks

75. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, Protocol of Kapestitsa, 28 May 1920. Çami, *Lufta e Popullit Shqiptar*, pp. 319-321.

76. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 7621, Iliakis' report, Kozani, 12 June 1920.

77. *Ibid.*

for their part were trying to give the impression that they were victors desiring reconciliation.

The fact that the Greeks did not take Korytsa aroused great agitation and sorrow among the town's Greek population, who considered the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio responsible for the checking of the Greek army's advance. According to Iliopoulos "...the citizens' despair is beyond description and their morale is in a terrible state. These are individuals who have sacrificed themselves to the Greek idea that if Korytsa were indeed lost they would become more fervently Albanian and more deadly enemies of Greece; and quite rightly, for if Venizelos really is thinking of selling us for the sake of Albanian friendship then woe betide him; the town will no longer have a single citizen with Greek consciousness; but we don't ever want to believe this, we hope rather for a happy settlement of the matter by the Conference..."⁷⁸. The citizens' outcry against the Metropolitan was so great that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was forced to advise the prefect of Florina to give them to understand that the Metropolitan of Dyrrahio had not prevented the occupation of the town, but that the government had taken this decision for reasons of political expediency⁷⁹.

After the signing of the Protocol of Kapestitsa, a great improvement in Greek-Albanian relations was observed. There were so many demonstrations of philhellenism in Albania, that the Italian consul in Ioannina was compelled to express his astonishment to the Governor-General, Kalevras. "We Italians are rather surprised by the Albanians' demonstrations of philhellenism at a time when Greece has not resigned her claims on Northern Epirus, nor is it in her interest to follow a few foolish Albanians in their anti-Italian policy"⁸⁰. The Greek position with regard to this matter was that Greece could follow only one policy, i.e. to maintain cordial relations of mutual trust with the Italian allies, and good neighbourly relations with the Albanians. The Albanians should not think that it was possible that the Greeks would renounce their rights to Northern Epirus, nor subscribe to their anti-Italian policy. The Italians thought it not at all unlikely that the anti-Italian movement in Albania would be opportunely supported by a certain group of English deputies⁸¹.

At the beginning of June, the Albanian government announced in a

78. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, Iliopoulos'letter to Adamidis, Koritsa, 30 May 1920.

79. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5 Korytsa, no. 6931, Foreign Ministry to Grigoriou, Athens, 12 June 1920.

80. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 7122, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 11 June 1920.

81. *Ibid.*

confidential circular to the Albanian local authorities that relations with Greece were cordial and that the Greek government was maintaining a friendly attitude⁸². At the same time, the Albanian newspaper "Drita", which was published in Aryirokastro, printed a leading article which bitterly attacked the Italians and stressed the need for Greek-Albanian co-operation, emphasising their common interests and exhorting the Albanian extremists to forget the past and to support the Greek-Albanian rapprochement⁸³.

It is highly likely that the attempt by the Albanians of Korytsa to approach the Greeks and the signing of the Protocol of Kapestitsa were a result of instructions issued by the Albanian government in Tirana. On the very day (May 27th) that the Albanian committee went to Trikoupi, an Albanian delegate of the Tirana government arrived in Ioannina and suggested a Greek-Albanian understanding. The Albanian government wanted to prepare the ground for closer contact with the Greeks, as it was preparing for the struggle against the Italians in Avlona. The Albanian government was aiming to gain the Greeks' assistance against Italy. The Albanian delegate, Georgios Kotsis of Aryirokastro, brother of senator Christos Kotsis, stressed to the Governor-General of Epirus, Kalevras, that "... if the Conference gives Northern Epirus to Greece, the Albanian government will comply with this decision. However, in making this concession, the Albanian government expresses the wish that Greece will first help Albania to rid herself of the presence of the Italians in the Avlona district, and second, will reinforce Albania's means of achieving this emancipation and her strength as a parliamentary state. The Albanian government is aware that the Greek government is obliged to observe prior obligations towards Italy concerning more general Greek matters, following the Greek-Italian agreement. However, the Albanian government would wish to know to what extent Greece will be in a position, for one reason or another, to support Albania's exploit against the Italian presence in Avlona. Albania is also prepared to accept a Greek King..."⁸⁴. Kalevras, naturally, could give no definite answer, but he emphasised that the Greek government took a sympathetic attitude towards any attempt on the part of the Albanians towards the safe-guarding of their nationality. The Albanians were even prepared to send ministers to Athens to negotiate with the Greeks⁸⁵.

The Albanian desire to reach an understanding was accepted with satis-

82. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 7154, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 10 June 1920.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 6415, Kalevras to Venizelos, Ioannina, 27 May 1920.

85. *Ibid.*

faction by the Greeks. The Greek government's wish was that Albania should be organised into an independent and viable constitutional state. But Greece could not help the Albanians in their struggle against the Italians. Besides, it was in the common interests of both Greece and Albania to maintain friendly relations with Italy⁸⁶.

At this time, when Greek-Albanian contact was being sought, on June 5th 1920 the Albanians began their attack on the Italians⁸⁷. During the battle, the Greek-Albanian discussions continued between Kalevras and various Albanian representatives. But the Albanians' easy victory over the Italians radically changed the situation and revived the Albanians' hopes. This was obvious at the meeting held between Kalevras and the Albanians on June 14th 1920, when the Albanian representatives let it be understood that in their opinion, after the expulsion of the Italians from Avlona, the international aspect of the Albanian question would change, and that this change could not but affect the ultimate fate of Northern Epirus too, in favour of the Albanians. The Albanians believed that after the Italians' withdrawal from Avlona, Greece would no longer be able effectively to support her claims to Northern Epirus⁸⁸. Kalevras, foreseeing this danger, telegraphed: "... it may be necessary, if there are no insurmountable obstacles, to examine the idea of immediate action on our part; because since Avlona has been seized by the Albanians, it is not unlikely that we shall have to deal with fanatical audacity and the predominance of the extremists, in so far as the Albanian government was never very strong on consistency..."⁸⁹. The commander of the 8th Division, General Negrepondis, was of the same opinion, and suggested the despatch of one more regiment which would assist in the immediate advance of the Greek army, an event which, in his opinion, the Italians desired, as their position in Avlona would thus be eased⁹⁰. But Venizelos, faithful to the advice of the English, would not allow the army to advance and occupy Northern Epirus⁹¹. And so the Greek-Albanian talks continued.

In the middle of June, during a private and confidential conversation

86. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 6415, Venizelos to Kalevras, Athens, 28 May 1920.

87. Muin Çami, *Lufta çlirimtare antiimperialiste e popullit Shqiptar ne vitet 1918-1920* (The antiimperialistic struggle for liberation of the Albanian people in the period 1918-1920), Tirana 1969, p. 184.

88. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 7265, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 14 June 1920.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 7267, General Negrepondis to War Office, Ioannina, 14 June 1920.

91. *A.Y.E.*, A/5, no. 7537, Venizelos to Foreign Ministry, London, 19 June 1920.

between Kalevras and the Albanian Christos Kotsis, the Albanian senator, asked if the Greek government would support Albania's attempt to organise herself into an independent state. He personally believed that Albania's struggle against Italy was of service to Greece, even if she could give the Albanians no help. He also stressed that, "... as far as the Northern Epirus question is concerned, we have said that we shall submit to the Conference's decision. In order to have the support of the worthiest Albanian patriots too, it would be desirable if matters between Greece and Albania were settled at once—though I consider this quite improbable—so that we may co-exist steadily and peacefully. The leading Nationalist Albanians today are also supporters of the establishment of a dual Greek-Albanian Kingdom. In fact, they are willing, if necessary, to discuss the autonomy of Northern Epirus—as you call it—as far as north of Liousna, including, of course, Avlona and Berati, in which case we shall turn to Greece for the officials and organisers etc. The Prime Minister Souleiman [Delvina] is a warm supporter of the agreement with the Greek government. On the other hand, Greece must take into account the fact that Italy, if she manages to remain in Avlona, will contrive anything in order to make plots and weaken the influence of the Nationalists, and consequently bring about more anarchy in Albania..."⁹².

Two large obstacles presented themselves to the endeavour for the success of a friendly relationship between Greece and Albania: The Greek-Italian agreement of 1919 and the mutual obligations linking all Mediterranean politics, and the fact that both sides were laying claim to the same region, i.e. Northern Epirus. The talks with the Greeks were of value to the Albanians, since they were thus secure from the danger of Northern Epirus' being occupied by the Greek army. Because if the Greeks were in Korytsa, the Albanian movement would be greatly obstructed and the Albanians would no longer be able to direct all their attention towards the war against the Italians.

After a hard battle, the Albanians put the Italians in a very difficult position. The Italians' morale was low because of the internal situation in Italy. The Italian Socialists bitterly condemned the military occupation in Albania, and when reinforcements were requested from Italy the soldiers, assisted by the Socialists, rebelled and refused to board the ships⁹³. And so the Italians were forced to begin negotiations with the Albanians. On August 2nd, the talks were completed and a preliminary protocol was signed, the basis

92. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 7634, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 18 June 1920.

93. Çami, *Lufta çlirimtare antiimperialiste*, p. 193. E. P. Stickey, *Southern Albania or Northern Epirus in European International Affairs, 1912-1923*, Stanford 1926, p. 124.

of which was that Avlona was handed over to Albania. The Italians, however, retained the island of Sasona. Italy also fully recognised Albania's independence⁹⁴.

The Albanian-Italian agreement radically altered the situation in Albania. The Albanians' feeling towards the Italians began to change. In a confidential telegram circular the Albanian government recommended that all anti-Italian demonstrations should cease. Italy, the circular said, now seemed prepared fully to respect Albanian rights and to support Albania in any endeavour to maintain her integrity⁹⁵. Under these circumstances, Albania's interest in reaching an understanding with the Greeks began to diminish. The Albanians no longer needed the Greeks, as their struggle against the Italians was over. Contact between them continued, however, but resulted in nothing concrete. The Albanian government refused to honour even the Protocol of Kapestitsa, maintaining that this agreement had been signed without their being informed, and that Fraseri and the other members of the committee had had no written authorisation from the Albanian government.

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94. For the full text of the agreement see Çami, *Lufta e popullit Shqiptar*, pp. 426-428. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 9606, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 5 August 1920.

95. *A.Y.E.*, 1920, A/5, no. 9765, Kalevras to Foreign Ministry, Ioannina, 6 August 1920.

A P P E N D I X

1.

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ
ΓΕΝΙΚΗ ΔΙΟΙΚΗΣΙΣ
ΚΟΖΑΝΗΣ - ΦΛΩΡΙΝΗΣ
ΑΡΙΘ. ΠΡΩΤ.

Ἐν Κοζάνῃ τῇ 30 Μαΐου 1920*

Πρὸς
Τὸ Ὑπουργεῖον τῶν Ἐξωτερικῶν
(Τμῆμα Πολιτικὸν Α')

Εἰς Ἀθήνας

Λαμβάνω τὴν τιμὴν νὰ καταστήσω ὑμῖν γνωστὴν τὴν γενομένην συνεννόησιν μεταξὺ ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ Ὑποστρατήγου Ν. Τρικουπῆ ἀφ' ἑνὸς ὡς ἀντιπροσώπων τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Κυβερνήσεως καὶ ἀφ' ἑτέρου τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῆς ἐλθούσης εἰς τὸ χωρίον Καπίστικα κατὰ τὴν 15 Μαΐου ἐ.ἔ., ὡς καὶ τῶν πρὸ καὶ τὰ κατ' αὐτὴν, διότι φρονῶ, ὅτι εἶνε ἡ πρώτη ἐπίσημος πρᾶξις μεταξὺ Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ἀλβανῶν μὲ βάσιν προσεγγίσεως.

Ὡς γνωστὸν κατὰ τὰς ἀρχὰς Μαΐου ἐ.ἔ. ὁ Γαλλικὸς στρατὸς ὁ φρουρῶν τὴν περιφέρειαν Κορυτσᾶς ἔλαβε διαταγὴν ν' ἀπέλθῃ ἐκεῖθεν μέχρι τῆς πρωΐας τῆς 14 Μαΐου ἐ.ἔ., θὰ παρέμενον δ' ἐκεῖ αἱ διοικητικαὶ ἀρχαί, ὅπως παραδώσουσιν ἡμῖν ὑπηρεσίαν ἐν ἡ περιπτώσει προηλαύνομεν μέχρι Κορυτσᾶς. Μεταβάς εἰς Θεσσαλονίκην παρεκάλεσα τὸν Γάλλον Συνταγματάρχην, τὸν Διοικητὴν τῶν Γαλλικῶν στρατευμάτων Μακεδονίας, ὅπως ἀναβάλῃ, εἰ δυνατόν, διὰ μίαν ἔστω ἡμέραν τὴν ἀπομάκρυνσιν τῶν Γαλλικῶν στρατευμάτων μέχρι οὗ προφθάσῃ ὁ ἡμέτερος στρατὸς νὰ φθάσῃ εἰς Κορυτσᾶν. Αἱ διαταγαὶ ὁμοῦ τὰς ὁποίας μᾶς ἐπέδειξε ἦσαν ἀσθηταὶ καὶ δὲν ἦτο δυνατόν νὰ ἀναβάλῃ οὐδὲ μίαν ὥραν τὴν ἀναχώρησιν τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον, καθ' ὅσον, ὡς μᾶς ἔλεγεν, ἐφοβεῖτο συμπλοκὴν μεταξὺ τοῦ ἡμετέρου στρατοῦ καὶ τῶν Ἀλβανῶν καὶ δὲν ἠδύνατο νὰ ἀναλάβῃ τὴν εὐθύνην τῶν ἐνδεχομένων συνεπειῶν.

Ἐν πάσῃ περιπτώσει ὁ ἡμέτερος στρατὸς μὲ ἀξιοθαύμαστον πορείαν προήλαυσε καὶ θὰ ἦτο δυνατόν νὰ εὐρίσκειται ἐν Κορυτσᾷ τὴν πρωΐαν τῆς ἀναχωρήσεως τοῦ Γαλλικοῦ στρατοῦ ἐκεῖθεν. Ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ Κυβέρνησις ἡ ἐν Τυράννοις ἐδρεύουσα ἔλαβε γνῶσιν ἐπίσης περὶ τῆς ἀναχωρήσεως τοῦ Γαλλικοῦ στρατοῦ ἐκ Κορυτσᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλε ἐκεῖ τὸν Ὑπουργὸν τῆς Συγκοινωνίας Ἐσρέφ Ἐφένδην Φράσερην, ἅμα τῇ ἀφίξει τοῦ ὁποίου ἐκηρύχθη ἐν συλλαλητηρίῳ ἡ ἔνωσις τῆς Κορυτσᾶς μετὰ τῆς Κυβερ-

* The dates of the Greek texts are according to the Julian calendar.

νήσεως Τυράννων, ἐξέδωκε δ' οὗτος τὴν συνημμένην προκήρυξίν του, στίφη δ' ἐπίσης ἄτακτα ἤρχισαν νὰ συρρέουν παρὰ τὴν Κορυτσᾶν. Ἐν πάσῃ περιπτώσει ἡ κατάληψις τῆς Κορυτσᾶς θὰ ἐγίνετο τὴν πρωΐαν τῆς 15 Μαΐου μὲ σύρραξιν τινα, ἡ ἔκτασις τῆς ὁποίας ἦτο ἀμφίβολος, καθότι ἦσαν διαφορούμεναι αἱ πληροφορίες. Αἱ ἐκ τῶν Γαλλικῶν ἀρχῶν ἐν τούτοις πληροφορίες ἦσαν τρομακτικαί.

Ἄλλ' ἐνῶ ὁ ἡμέτερος στρατὸς εὐρίσκετο εἰς τὰ σύνορα τῆς Κορυτσᾶς ἐλήφθη τηλεγράφημα τοῦ κ. Προέδρου τῆς Κυβερνήσεως διατάσσοντος νὰ ἀνακόψη ὁ στρατὸς τὴν προέλασίν του εἰς τὴν γραμμὴν τῆς κατὰ τὸ 1913 προσωρινῆς κατοχῆς μας καὶ ἀναμείνῃ ἐκεῖ διαταγᾶς. Κατόπιν τοῦ τηλεγραφήματος τούτου ὁ στρατὸς κατελάμβανε ὑψώματα ἰδρῶν φυλάκια ἐπὶ τῆς γραμμῆς. Ἡ ἐντύπωσις ἐν τούτοις εἰς Κορυτσᾶν ἦτο, ὅτι ὁ στρατὸς θὰ προήλανε.

Τοῦτο ἀφ' ἐνὸς ἐνεθουσία τοὺς ἡμετέρους, ἐτρομοκράτει δὲ τοὺς Ἄλβανιστάς. Ἐπρεπε δὲ διὰ παντὸς μέσου νὰ εὐρωμεν τρόπον συναντήσεως μετὰ τῶν Ἄλβανῶν, διότι ἐὰν ἀνεκόπτετο ἡ προέλασις ἄνευ συνεννοήσεως θὰ ἀπεδίδετο τοῦτο εἰς δειλίαν καὶ θὰ ἐδημιουργεῖτο ἐν Κορυτσᾶ κατάστασις ἀληθῶς τρομακτικὴ διὰ τοὺς ἡμετέρους, καθ' ὧν θὰ ἐλαμβάνοντο μέτρα πιεστικά, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ τοῦ ἐκεῖ Μητροπολίτου Δυρραχίου διέτρεχε ἀφευκτον κίνδυνον.

Ἄλλ' ἐνῶ εὐρισκόμεθα εἰς τὴν στενόχωρον ταύτην θέσιν μία Ἐπιτροπὴ Ἄλβανιστῶν συνοδευομένη ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀντιπροσώπου τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Δυρραχίου ἐπεσκέφθη ἐν Σμαρδέση τὸν Στρατηγὸν κ. Ν. Τρικοῦπην, εἰς ὃν ἐνεχείρισε τὴν ἐσώκλειστον ἐν ἀντιγράφῳ ἐπιστολὴν τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Δυρραχίου, ὅστις πιεσθεὶς βεβαίως ὑπέγραψε τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ταύτην. Ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ ἐζήτηει συνεννόησιν. Ὁ Ὑποστράτηγος δὲμος κ. Τρικούπης ἐδήλωσε, ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐκτελεῖ διαταγᾶς, ὅτι δὲ ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ ὄφειλε νὰ ἔλθῃ πρὸς συνεννόησιν μετ' ἐμοῦ εἰς Φλώριναν ὅπου εὐρισκόμεν συνοδευόμενος καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐκ Λειψίστης Ἄλβανοῦ Βέη Ριζᾶ-Βέη Χαμζᾶ Χουρσίτ, ὅστις θὰ ἐχρησίμευεν ὡς σύμβουλός μου ἐν Κορυτσᾶ, ἐν ἣ περιπτώσει προήλανε ὁ στρατὸς. Ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ ἔσπευσε νὰ ἔλθῃ. Ἐν τῷ μεταξύ εἶχον ζητήσει εἰς τὸ τηλέφωνον τὸν κ. Πρόεδρον τῆς Κυβερνήσεως διὰ τὴν 10 μ.μ. τῆς 14 Μαΐου 1920.

Ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ ἐφθασεν εἰς Φλώριναν τὴν 9 μ.μ. Ἄμα παρουσιάσθη ἐνώπιόν μου, ἐξέφρασα τὴν χαρὰν μου, διότι συναντῶ Ἄλβανούς, οἱ ὅποιοι ἔχουν κοινὴν μετὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων καταγωγὴν. Εἶπα, ὅτι εἶχον ὀλην τὴν διάθεσιν νὰ συντελέσω εἰς τὴν ἀποφυγὴν αἰματοχυσίας διότι φρονῶ, ὅτι πρέπει αἱ σχέσεις Ἄλβανῶν καὶ Ἑλλήνων νὰ εἶνε ἀδελφικαὶ χάριν τοῦ κοινοῦ συμφέροντος, ὅτι δέ, ἀφοῦ ὁ Μητροπολίτης Δυρραχίου παρακαλεῖ τόσον

ἐπιμόνωσ δια τοῦ ἀντιπροσώπου του νά ἀποφευχθῆ αἱματοχυσία, θά ἀναλάβω τήν εὐθύνην νά τήν ἐμποδίσω, καί ὅτι θά συνίστων τοῦτο εἰς τόν κ. Πρόεδρον τῆς Κυβερνήσεως μεθ' οὗ μετ' ὀλίγον θά συνεννοούμην τηλεφωνικῶσ. Εἶπον ἐπίσης εἰς τήν Ἐπιτροπήν, ὅτι ὡσ ἀπαραίτητον ὄρον τῆς ἐνάρξεως συνεννοήσεως θέτω τήν ἄμεσον ἀπομάκρυνσιν τῶν Ἀλβανῶν τῶν καταλαβόντων ἤδη τήν περιφέρειαν Πρέσπας. Ἡ Ἐπιτροπή με διεβεβαίωσε, ὅτι θά ἐκπληρώσῃ τόν ὄρον τοῦτον, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἀπηρεῖτο χρόνος λόγῳ τοῦ ὅτι εἶνε μακρυναίαι ἀποστάσεις, με παρεκάλεσε δέ, ὅπως τηλεφωνήσω ἐν τῷ μεταξῷ εἰς τόν Ὑποστράτηγον νά σταματήσῃ τήν προέλασιν. Ἐδῆλωσα, ὅτι λαμβάνων ὑπ' ὄψιν τὰς καλὰς ἐκατέρωθεν διαθέσεις, γνωρίζων δ' ἐξ ἄλλου τὰς ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας προσπαθείας τοῦ κ. Προέδρου τῆς Κυβερνήσεως, θ' ἀνελάμβανον τήν μεγάλην εὐθύνην νά τηλεφωνήσω εἰς τόν Στρατηγόν νά ἀνακόψῃ τήν προέλασιν ἐπὶ τῇ βεβαίᾳ ἐλπίδι, ὅτι πλήρης θά ἐπέλθῃ ἡ συνεννόησις.

Ἐν τῷ μεταξῷ εἰδοποιήθην νά μεταβῶ εἰς τὸ τηλέφωνον πρὸς συνεννόησιν μετὰ τοῦ κ. Προέδρου τῆς Κυβερνήσεως, παρεκάλεσα δέ τήν Ἐπιτροπήν νά περιμένῃ τήν ὀριστικὴν ἀπάντησιν.

Ὁ κ. Πρόεδρος τῆς Κυβερνήσεως μοι ἀνεκοίνωσε τότε τὰ ἐξῆς.

«Εἶνε ἤδη σχεδὸν βέβαιον, ὅτι δὲν θά προελάσωμεν πέραν τῶν διὰ τοῦ πρωῖνοῦ τηλεγραφήματός μου σημειωθέντων ὀρίων (δηλ. τῆς προσωρινῆς κατὰ τὸ 1913 κατοχῆς μας) πρὸς κατάληψιν Κορυτσᾶς. Ἄλλ' ἂν ὀριστικῶσ ἀναβληθῆ ἡ κατάληψις αὐτῇ ἐνδείκνυται νά ἐπωφεληθῶμεν τῆς ἀναβολῆς, ὅπως ἐξασφαλίσωμεν εἰς τοὺς ἐκεῖ ἡμετέρους καλὴν μεταχείρισιν ἐκ μέρους τῶν Ἀλβανῶν. Εἰσηγοῦμαι ἐπομένωσ τήν γνώμην, ὅπως συνεννοηθῆτε μετὰ Μητροπολίτου Δυρραχίου, ἵνα οὗτος ἀναλάβῃ ἀπέναντι Ἀλβανῶν νά πείσῃ ἡμᾶς, ὅπως μὴ προβῶμεν εἰς κατάληψιν ἀναμένοντες τήν ἀπόφασιν τῆς συνδιασκέψεως τῶν Ἀλβανῶν ἀναλαμβάνόντων νά σεβασθῶσι τὰ ἡμέτερα ἰδρύματα ἐν Κορυτσᾷ».

Εἰς τόν κ. Πρόεδρον ἀνεκοίνωσα τότε τὰ τῆς ἐλεύσεως τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς, ἥτις μ' ἐβεβαίωσ ὅτι θ' ἀπεστέλλοντο ἀντιπρόσωποι τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς Κυβερνήσεως εἰς Ἀθήνας πρὸς λύσιν τοῦ βορειοηπειρωτικοῦ ζητήματος καὶ ἐζήτησα νά μ' ἐξουσιοδοτήσῃ νά προβῶ εἰς συνεννόησιν. Εἰς τὰ σχετικὰ ἐρωτήματα ἡ ἀπάντησις τοῦ κ. Προέδρου ἦτο ἡ ἐξῆς.

«Ἐξουσιοδοτῶ ὑμᾶς νά δηλώσῃτε ὅτι θέλοντες νά ἀποδείξωμεν τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἡμῶν, ὅπως ἀποφευχθῆ ματαία αἱματοχυσία καὶ ὅπως αἱ μέλλουσαι σχέσεις ἡμῶν εἶνε καλῆς γειτονίας ἐνεργήσετε ὑπὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦτο πρὸς συνεννόησιν ὑπὸ τοὺς ἐξῆς ὄρους.

1. Ὅπως ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ Κυβέρνησις ὑποσχεθῆ, ὅτι οὐδεὶς τῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ

ἐδάφους της κατοικούντων ἡμετέρων πάθη τι, τὰ δὲ σχολεῖα καὶ αἱ ἐκκλησιαστικαὶ λειτουργοῦν ἐλευθέρως.

2. Ὅπως ἀμφοτέροι ὑποσχεθῶμεν νὰ συμμορφωθῶμεν πρὸς τὴν ὑπὸ τῆς συνδιασκέψεως χαραχθησομένην γραμμὴν τῶν ὁρίων μας καὶ

3. Ὅπως μηδεμία γίνεται ὑπέρβασις τῆς προσωρινῆς γραμμῆς τῆς κατοχῆς μας, ἥτις πρέπει νὰ εἶνε ἢ διὰ τοῦ πρωῖνου τηλεγραφήματός μου καθορισθεῖσα. Ἐφιστῶ τὴν ὑμετέραν προσοχὴν ὅτι ἡ γραμμὴ αὕτη δὲν εἶνε ἢ τοῦ πρωτοκόλλου τῆς Φλωρεντίας. Πρὸς βορρᾶν τοῦ ὄρους Γράμμου ἀκολουθῆ τὸ σύνορον τῆς μεθορίου τοῦ Καζᾶ Κορυτσᾶς. Ἡμεῖς τότε ἀποδεχθέντες τὸ πρωτόκολλον, ἐζητήσαμεν, ὅπως ἀντὶ τῶν ὁρίων τοῦ Καζᾶ Κορυτσᾶς, τὰ ὁποῖα οὔτε ἐν τῷ πρωτοκόλλῳ καθορίζονται οὔτε ἐπισήμως μᾶς εἶνε γνωστὰ τὸ σύνορον ἀκολουθήσῃ τὴν γραμμὴν τοῦ πρωῖνου τηλεγραφήματός μου, τὴν ὁποῖαν ἐδηλώσαμεν, ὅτι θὰ καταλάβωμεν ἐλπίζοντες, ὅτι θὰ ἐγκριθῇ αὕτη ὑπὸ τῶν Δυνάμεων. Αἱ Δυνάμεις ἀπήντησαν, ὅτι θὰ ἐξετάσουν εὐμενῶς τὴν αἰτησίαν μας, πράγματι δὲ τὴν γραμμὴν ταύτην κατεῖχομεν μέχρι οὗ ὁ Στρατηγὸς Σαράιγ μᾶς ἀπεμάκρυνεν ἐκεῖθεν.

Ταῦτα ἀναφέρω διὰ νὰ μὴ μνημονεύετε γραμμὴν Φλωρεντίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν γραμμὴν ἣν κατεῖχομεν πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου».

Προκειμένου περὶ ἀντιρήσεων τοῦ Ὑποστρατήγου διὰ τὸν διασκορπισμὸν τῶν στρατιωτικῶν δυνάμεων ὁ κ. Πρόεδρος μὸς ἀνεκοίνωσε.

«Θὰ εἴπητε εἰς Ὑποστράτηγον, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ὑπάρχει λόγος νὰ διασπειρῇ τὸ στράτευμά του εἰς κατάληψιν ὄλων τῶν σημείων τῆς γραμμῆς καὶ ὅτι ἀρκεῖ νὰ καταλάβῃ ὀλίγα τινὰ ἐπίκαιρα σημεῖα. Ἐξουσιοδοτῶ ἄλλως τε ὑμᾶς καὶ Στρατηγὸν ν' ἀφίσητε προσωρινῶς, ἂν τὸ ἐγκρίνητε, ἔξω τῆς γραμμῆς τὸν πρὸς τὴν λίμνην Πρέσπας ἀγκῶνα, κατοικοῦμενον ἀποκλειστικῶς ἀπὸ Τουρκαλβανούς. Εἰς τοὺς Ἀλβανούς θὰ δηλώσητε, ὅτι εὐχαρίστως θὰ δεχθῶμεν εἰς Ἀθήνας τοὺς ἀντιπροσώπους, οὓς ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ Κυβέρνησις θὰ ἔστελλε, ὅπως ἀποπειραθῶμεν τὴν λύσιν τοῦ βορειοηπειρωτικοῦ ζητήματος.

Ἐνεργήσατε κατὰ κρίσιν σας. Ἄλλως τε ἀφοῦ σχεδὸν βέβαιον εἶνε, ὅτι δὲν θὰ προελάσωμεν εἰς Κορυτσᾶν θὰ εὑρετε τρόπον οὕτως ἢ ἄλλως νὰ φθάσητε εἰς συνεννόησιν καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο ἔχετε μεθ' Ὑποστρατήγου πλήρη ἐλευθερίαν ἐνεργείας».

Μετά τὴν συνεννόησιν ταύτην διαρκέσασαν δίωρον περίπου, ἐπανελθὼν ἀνεκοίνωσα εἰς τὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν, ὅτι ὁ κ. Πρόεδρος συνήνεσε εἰς τὴν συνεννόησιν. Ἐτόνισα εἰς αὐτοὺς τὴν κολοσσιαίαν εὐθύνην, ἣν ἀνέλαβον νὰ ἀνακόψω τὴν προέλασιν τοῦ στρατοῦ μας, ἐνῶ καὶ τὰ λεπτὰ τῆς ὥρας μᾶς ἦσαν πολύτιμα, καὶ ὅτι τὸ μέγεθος τῆς εὐθύνης ταύτης, ἂν ἀπεδοκιμαζόμεν ὑπὸ τῆς Κυβερνήσεως, μόνον δι' αὐτοκτονίας θὰ ἦτο δυνατόν νὰ δώσω καὶ

τοὺς παρεκάλεσα νὰ ἀναλάβουν μέρος τῆς εὐθύνης μου ταύτης, διὰ νὰ μὴ μὲ κάμουν νὰ μετανοήσω διὰ τὰ ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἀλβανίας αἰσθήματά μου. Μοῦ ὑπεσχέθησαν.

Εἶπα τότε εἰς τὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν, ὅτι τὴν ἐπομένην τὴν 3 μ.μ. θὰ μετέβαινον εἰς Καπίστικαν μετὰ τοῦ Ὑποστρατήγου συνοδευόμενος καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ριζᾶ-Βέη διὰ νὰ κλείσωμεν ὀριστικὴν συμφωνίαν. Ἐκεῖ ἔπρεπε νὰ ἔλθῃ διμελής Ἐπιτροπὴ τῶν μετὰ τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Δυρραχίου, ἀφοῦ εἰς αὐτὸν πρὸ πάντων ὀφείλεται ἡ συνεννόησις αὐτὴ καὶ εἰς τὸν ὁποῖον πρέπει νὰ εἶνε ὑποχρεωμένοι οὗτοι. Ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ παρεδέχθη τοῦτο, μὲ παρεκάλεσε μόνον ἀντὶ διμελοῦς Ἐπιτροπῆς νὰ εἶνε τριμελής. Ἀπήντησα εἰς τοῦτο, ὅτι μὴ ἔνδιαφερόμενος διὰ τίποτε ἄλλο παρὰ εἰς τὸ νὰ ἐξακριβώσω, ἂν οἱ εἰλικρινεῖς λόγοι μου φιλίας καὶ ἀγάπης πρὸς τὴν Ἀλβανίαν εὐρίσκουν ἀντίστοιχον ἠχώ, θὰ ἐπεθύμουν ὄχι τριμελῆ ἐπιτροπὴν ἐκ μέρους τῶν, ἀλλ' ἐξηκονταμελῆ καὶ ἐπομένως εἶνε ἐλεύθεροι νὰ ὀρίσουν ὅσα πρόσωπα θέλουν. Ἀνεχώρησαν τὴν 3 μετὰ τὸ μεσονύκτιον.

Τὴν ἐπομένην συνοδευόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὑποστρατήγου, τοῦ κ. Νομάρχου Φλωρίνης καὶ τοῦ Ριζᾶ-Βέη μετέβημεν εἰς Καπίστικαν τὴν 3 μ.μ. Εὐρίσκετο ἐκεῖ ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ, ἡ ὁποία μοῦ παρουσίασε τὸ ἐσώκλειστον πληρεξούσιόν της. Ἡμεῖς ὡς εἰκός, δὲν εἶχομεν πληρεξούσιον καὶ ἐφαίνετο, ὅτι ἀνελαμβάνομεν καὶ προσωπικὴν εὐθύνην.

Ἄμα τῇ συναντήσει μας ἐχαιρέτησα τὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν τονίσας τοὺς δεσμούς μας τοῦ αἵματος καὶ εὐχρηθεῖς, ὅπως ἡ πρώτη αὐτῆ συνάντησις ἀποτελέσῃ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τῆς ὀλοσχεροῦς ἄρσεως παρεξηγήσεων καὶ τῆς ἐγκαινιάσεως διαρκοῦς φιλίας.

Ὑπὸ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα ἀπήντησεν ὁ Πρόεδρος τῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς Ἐσρέφ Ἐφένδης.

Τὸ πρωτόκολλον, τὸ ὁποῖον θὰ ὑπεγράφετο ἔφερον μετ' ἐμοῦ Ἕλληνιστὶ συντεταγμένον. Πρὸ τῆς ἀναγνώσεώς του ἐζήτησα τὴν πληροφορίαν, ἂν ἐξεπληρώθη ὁ ὅρος τῆς ἀποχωρήσεως τῶν Ἀλβανῶν ἐκ τῆς περιφερείας Πρέσπας καὶ ἐν γένει πέραν τῆς γραμμῆς, τὴν ὁποίαν κατείχομεν πρὸ τοῦ τελευταίου πολέμου. Μοῦ ἐδῆλωσαν, ὅτι πρέπει νὰ καθορίσωμεν τὴν γραμμὴν ταύτην καὶ θὰ ἐξεπληρουτο ἡ ὑπόσχεσις. Ἐπὶ τοῦ σημείου τούτου ἐγένετο συζήτησις. Ἐπειδὴ εἰς τὸ χωρίον Βάρνικ εἶχον πληροφορηθῆ, ὅτι διεξήγετο προπαγάνδα Βουλγαρικὴ ἐφρόντισα νὰ προωθήσωμεν τὴν γραμμὴν μας πέραν τοῦ χωρίου τούτου. Οὕτω δὲ διὰ τῆς γενομένης συμφωνίας ἡ γραμμὴ μας ἔχει ὠθηθῆ πέραν τῆς γραμμῆς, τὴν ὁποίαν κατείχομεν πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου περιλαμβάνοντες ἐντὸς τῶν ὁρίων μας καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν ἄγουσαν ἀπὸ Κορυτσᾶς εἰς Μοναστήριον. Εἰς τὸ σημεῖον τοῦτο μᾶς παρεκάλεσεν ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ νὰ μὴ παρεμβάλωμεν προσκῶμματα εἰς τὴν μεταξύ Κορυτσᾶς καὶ

Μοναστηρίου συγκοινωνίαν. Ὑπεσχέθημεν τοῦτο καὶ ἐδόθησαν σχετικαὶ διαταγαὶ εἰς τὰ ἡμέτερα φυλάκια.

Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀνέγνωσα Ἑλληνιστὶ τὸ ἑκράτου πρωτόκολλον συνταγμένον ὑπὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς συνεννοήσεώς μας καὶ προσεκάλεσα τὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν, ὅπως ὑπογράψῃ μεθ' ἡμῶν τὸ πρωτόκολλον τοῦτο. Ἐπειδὴ ἐν τούτοις δὲν ἐγνώριζον πάντες τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν μετεφράσθη ἀμέσως τὸ πρωτόκολλον ὑπὸ τοῦ παρισταμένου Νομάρχου Φλωρίνης κ. Γρηγορίου καὶ ὑπεγράφη, ὡς φαίνεται. Ἐκότερον τῶν μελῶν ἔλαβε ἐν πρωτότυπον.

Μετὰ τὴν σύνταξιν τοῦ γενικοῦ τούτου πρωτοκόλλου ἐζήτησα νὰ ὑπογραφῇ ἕτερον πρόσθετον πρωτόκολλον φέρον τοὺς ἐξῆς ὁρους καθαρῶς ἐσωτερικῆς φύσεως.

1. Ἐκτὸς τῆς Χωροφυλακῆς νὰ μὴ περιφέρονται ἔνοπλοι εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὰ χωρία.

2. Νὰ προστεθῶσιν εἰς τὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν Κορυτσᾶς καὶ τρία μέλη ἐκ τῶν ἡμετέρων.

3. Νὰ ἀπαγορευθοῦν αὐστηρῶς αἱ προκλητικαὶ συγκεντρώσεις.

4. Νὰ προστεθῶσιν εἰς τὴν Χωροφυλακὴν καὶ ἄλλα πρόσωπα ἐμπνέοντα ἐμπιστοσύνην, καὶ

5. Νὰ παραδοθῶσιν εἰς τὴν κοινότητα τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν Γαλλικῶν ἀρχῶν ἐκκενωθέντα κοινοτικὰ κτίρια.

Τοὺς ὁρους τούτους παρεδέχθη ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ, ἀλλὰ τῇ συστάσει τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Δυρραχίου ἀπεφασίσθη νὰ μὴ συνταχθῇ πρωτόκολλον, ἀλλὰ ν' ἀναλάβῃ ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ ὑποχρέωσιν ἀπέναντι τούτου διὰ τὴν ἐκπλήρωσιν τῶν ὁρων τούτων.

Ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ μὲ παρεκάλεσε ἐν τέλει νὰ διευκολύνω τὴν Ἀλβανικὴν Κυβέρνησιν ν' ἀποστέλλῃ τὸ Ἀλβανικὸν ταχυδρομεῖον μέσφ Φλωρίνης καὶ Θεσσαλονίκης, διότι δὲν ἤθελον νὰ ἀποστέλλουν τοῦτο μέσφ Αὐλῶνος. Ὑπεσχέθη τοῦτο καὶ ἐνήρησα.

Ἐν τέλει ἡ Ἐπιτροπὴ μὲ διεβεβαίωσε, ὅτι ἐντὸς 20 ἡμερῶν θὰ ἐστέλλοντο ἀντιπρόσωποι τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς Κυβερνήσεως πρὸς ὀριστικὴν μετὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας συνεννόησιν, ὑποθέτω ὅμως, ὅτι λόγφ τῆς ἀναχωρήσεως ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν τοῦ κ. Προέδρου ἢ ἀποστολῆ τῆς Ἀντιπροσωπείας ταύτης θ' ἀναβληθῇ μέχρι τῆς ἐπανόδου του.

Ἐπισυνάπτων ὧδε ὅλα τὰ σχετικὰ, ἀναγκαῖον κρίνω νὰ τονίσω, ὅτι ἐν τῇ περιπτώσει ταύτῃ, ἐνῶ ἡμεῖς ἐμπλοφάραμεν, παρέχομεν πρὸς τὴν Ἀλβανικὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν τὴν ἐντύπωσιν νικητῶν ἐπιθυμούντων τὴν συμφιλίωσιν καὶ μοῦ παρεσχέθη ἡ ἐντύπωσις, ὅτι ἐπεκοινωνήσαμεν ψυχικῶς μετὰ τῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς πρὸς τὴν κατεύθυνσιν ταύτην. Εὐκταῖον εἶνε, ὅπως αἱ τάσεις αὗται ἐνισχυθῶσι. Καὶ εἶμαι βέβαιος, ὅτι καταρθώσαμεν νὰ ἐμπνεύσω-

μεν πλήρη ἐμπιστοσύνην εἰς τὴν Ἐπιτροπὴν ὄχι μόνον, διότι ἐπαίξαμεν τὸν ρόλον τοῦ ὑποκριτοῦ ἄρκετὰ καλά, ἀλλὰ καὶ διότι ἀπὸ τῆς ἐγκαταστάσεώς μου ἐνταῦθα παρέχω δείγματα φιλαλβανικῶν αἰσθημάτων καὶ διότι ἠκολουθούμην ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐπιφανοῦς Ἀλβανοῦ Ριζᾶ-Βέη κατέχοντος ἐπιφανῆ θέσιν εἰς τὴν ἐκτίμησιν τῶν Ἀλβανῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ διότι ὁ νῦν Γεν. Διευθυντῆς τοῦ Ὑπουργείου τῶν Ἐξωτερικῶν τῆς Ἀλβανίας Νουρῆ-Βέη, συγγενῆς τοῦ Προέδρου τῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς, εἶνε στενώτατος φίλος μου ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐτῶν, εἶχε δὲ καταστήσει τὰς σχέσεις μας ταύτας γνωστὰς εἰς τὸν Ἑσρέφ ἐφέν-δην, ὡς μοὶ εἶπε οὗτος.

Ἡ ἐντύπωσίς μου εἶνε ἐπομένως, ὅτι ἐπῆλθε εἰλικρινῆς προσωρινῆ συνεννόησις. Εὐχόμαι, ὅπως ἡ συνεννόησις αὕτη ἔχη ἀγαθὰ ὀριστικὰ ἀποτελέσματα. Ἐχοντες γείτονας Σλαύους καὶ Τούρκους θὰ ἦτο εὐτύχημα, ἂν τὸ δημιουργηθησόμενον Ἀλβανικὸν Κράτος διατελῆ εἰς στενὴν ψυχικὴν ἐπαφὴν μὲ τὸ ἡμέτερον ἐπὶ τῇ βάσει τῆς κοινῆς καταγωγῆς καὶ τῶν κοινῶν συμφερόντων, ἡ ἰδέα δὲ αὕτη ἐνέπνεε τὴν μετὰ τῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς θερμὴν συνομιλίαν μου, εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν ἐφαίνετο αὕτη πλήρως ἀνταποκρινομένη.

Ὁ Γενικὸς Διοικητῆς

ΗΛΙΑΚΗΣ

2.

DEPECHE TELEGRAPHIQUE CHIFFREE

ΕΜΠΙΣΤΕΥΤΙΚΟΝ ΠΡΩΤΟΚΟΛΛΟΝ	LIEU D'EXPÉDITON	DATE	HEURE
AP. ΠΡΩΤ. 6415 A/5 ΕΘΕΩΡΗΘΗ ΤΗ, 15.5.920	ΙΩΑΝΝΙΝΑ	14/27-5-20 191	15.20'.

AFFAIRES ETRANGÈRES

ATHENS

Ἐξαιρετικῶς ἐπεῖγον. Ἀπόλυτος προτεραιότης.

Ἀφίκετο σήμερον ἐνταῦθα ἐξ Ἀργυροκάστρου ὁ ἐκεῖ οικονομικὸς ἔφορος Γεώργιος Κότσης, ἀδελφὸς τοῦ γερουσιαστοῦ Χρ. Κότση, ἔχων ἐπίσημον ἐντολὴν ἐκ μέρους τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς κυβερνήσεως νὰ μοὶ δηλώσῃ τὰ ἐξῆς. «Ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις καὶ Ἀλβανικὸς λαὸς ὑπέστησαν τελευταίως καίριον πλήγμα ἐκ τῆς στάσεως τῆς Ἰταλίας, ἥτις ἠπάτησε κυβέρνησιν καὶ Ἀλβανικὸν λαόν. Ἀλβανία ἀμυνομένη ὑπὲρ ἀνεξαρτησίας τῆς ἐπιτελεῖ ἔργον στοιχειῶδους πατριωτισμοῦ. Ἑλληνικὴ κυβέρνησις δὲν πρέπει νὰ προσάψῃ εἰς Ἀλβανικὴν κυβέρνησιν κατηγορίαν δι' ἀγῶνα ὑπὲρ Ἀλβανικῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας. Ἐκ τῆς σκέψεως ταύτης ὀρωμένη ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις προτείνει Ἑλληνο-Ἀλβανικὴν συνεννόησιν καὶ ἐπικαλεῖται συνδρομὴν τῆς Ἑλλάδος». Ἀπήντησα τὰ ἐξῆς. «Ἡ Γενικὴ Διοίκησις Ἡπειροῦ δὲν δύναται νὰ ἔλθῃ εἰς οὐδεμίαν ἐπίσημον ἐπαφὴν μετ' Ἀλβανικῆς κυβερνήσεως, οὐχ ἦττον, προσέθηκα, δὲν δυνάμεθα ἢ λίαν συμπαθῶς νὰ ἀποβλέπωμεν εἰς τὴν πραγματοποιήσιν τῶν ἐθνικῶν πόθων τῶν Ἀλβανῶν, ἀρκεῖ εἰς τοὺς Ἀλβανικοὺς αὐτοὺς πόθους νὰ μὴ περιλαμβάνεται ἡ Βόρειος Ἡπειρος, ὅπου τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν στοιχεῖον πλειοψηφεῖ». Εἶτα ἠρώτησα ἐπὶ τῇ βάσει τίνος δεδομένου καὶ ὑπὸ ποίους ὄρους φρονεῖ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις ὅτι εἶναι δυνατὴ μία Ἑλληνο-Ἀλβανικὴ συνεννόησις καὶ τίνος εἶδους συνδρομὴν ἐννοεῖ ἐκ μέρους τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Ἀπάντησις. «Ἐὰν ἡ Συνδιάσκεψις ἐπιδιόκησεν τὴν Βόρειον Ἡπειρον εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις θὰ συμμορφωθῇ πρὸς τὴν ἀπόφασιν ταύτην. Οὐχ ἦττον ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις προβαίνουσα εἰς τὴν παραχώρησιν ταύτην ἐκφράζει τὴν εὐχὴν ὅπως ἡ Ἑλλὰς ὑποβοηθήσῃ τὴν Ἀλβανίαν, ἀφ' ἑνὸς μὲν εἰς τὸ νὰ ἀπαλλαγῇ τῆς Ἰταλικῆς παρουσίας εἰς τὴν περιφέρειαν Αὐλῶνος, ἀφ' ἑτέρου δὲ ἐνι-

σχύση τὰ μέσα τῆς Ἀλβανίας πρὸς ἐπίτευξιν τῆς χειραφεσίας αὐτῆς καὶ τὴν ἐνδυνάμωσιν τῆς ὡς κοινοβουλευτικὸν κράτος. Ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις συναισθάνεται ὅτι Ἑλληνικὴ κυβέρνησις διὰ τὰ γενικώτερα ζητήματα τῆς Ἑλλάδος εἶναι ὑποχρεωμένη νὰ τηρήσῃ ἀνειλημμένας ὑποχρεώσεις ἀπέναντι τῆς Ἰταλίας, ἀπορροεῦσας ἐκ τῆς τυχόν Ἑλληνο-Ἰταλικῆς συμφωνίας. Ἐν τούτοις Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις ἐρωτᾷ κατὰ πόσον ἡ Ἑλλὰς θὰ εἶναι εἰς θέσιν διὰ τοῦτον ἢ ἐκείνον τὸν λόγον νὰ ὑποβοηθήσῃ τὸ ἔργον τῆς Ἀλβανίας κατὰ παρουσίας τῶν Ἰταλῶν εἰς Ἀδῶνα. Ἡ Ἀλβανία εἶναι διατεθειμένη νὰ δεχθῇ καὶ Ἑλληνα Βασιλέα». Ἀπήντησα ὅτι προκειμένου περὶ τῆς γενικῆς γραμμῆς τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐδὲν δύναμαι νὰ εἶπω διότι Κυβέρνησις τῶν Ἀθηνῶν εἶναι ἡ ρυθμίζουσα αὐτὴν, ἐκείνο ὅμως τὸ ὁποῖον δύναμαι νὰ βεβαιώσω εἶναι ὅτι ἡ Ἑλλὰς καὶ κυβέρνησις τῆς δὲν δύνανται παρὰ συμπαθῶς νὰ ἀποβλέπωσιν εἰς κάθε προσπάθειαν τῶν Ἀλβανῶν πρὸς ἐξασφάλισιν τοῦ ἔθνισμοῦ των. Ἑλληνικὴ κυβέρνησις ἐμπνέεται σήμερον ἀπὸ αἰσθήματα ἀπολύτου σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τὰς ἐθνικὰς παραδόσεις κάθε λαοῦ. Ἐννοεῖ νὰ σεβασθῇ γλώσσαν, σχολεῖα καὶ τὴν ἐθνικὴν ἀνάπτυξιν τῶν Ἀλβανῶν καὶ ἐὰν κατ' ἀπόφασιν τῆς Συνδιασκέψεως ἡ Ἑλλὰς καταλάβῃ τὴν Βόρειον Ἠπειρον, θὰ ἐπικρατήσῃ πνεῦμα ἰσονομίας καὶ ἀδελφικῆς συμβιώσεως τῶν Ἑλλήνων μετὰ τῶν Ἀλβανῶν. Εἰς ταῦτα ὁ ἀπεσταλμένος ἐδήλωσεν τὰ ἑξῆς. «Ἀναγνωρίζω ὅτι δὲν δύνασθε νὰ μοὶ δώσητε ἀπάντησιν θίγουσαν τὴν γενικὴν πολιτικὴν τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Πάντως παρακαλῶ ἐκ μέρους τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς κυβερνήσεως διαβιβασθῶσιν εἰς Ἀθήνας αἱ διαθέσεις αὐτῆς, ἥτις εἶναι διατεθειμένη ν' ἀποστείλῃ ἐνταῦθα γερουσιαστὰς ἢ καὶ δύο ἐκ τῶν ὑπουργῶν πρὸς διαπραγματεύσιν». Ἦρχισε κατόπιν καθαρῶς ἰδιωτικὴ συζήτησις καὶ λόγου γενομένου περὶ τῶν ἀξιώσεων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπὶ τῆς Β. Ἠπείρου, ὁ κ. Κότσης μοὶ ἀνεκοίνωσεν ὅτι ἡ κυβέρνησις τῶν Τυράνων ὡς ἔχει αὐτὸς πληροφορίας σκέπτεται νὰ προβάλλῃ ἀντίστασιν εἰς τὴν προέλασιν τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ στρατοῦ. Τοῦτο θὰ τὸ πράξῃ διὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν. Ἐν τούτοις οἱ διάφοροι βέηδες, νοικοκυρεῖοι τῆς Β. Ἠπείρου, θὰ ἐπεθύμουν νὰ ἀποφευχθῇ ἡ αἱματοχυσία καὶ νὰ ἐπιτευχθῇ μία τοπικὴ συνεννόησις, τοσοῦτ' ἄλλο καθ' ὅσον οἱ μᾶλλον θερμοίμοι τῶν Ἑλληνομανῶν ἐν Ἰωαννίνοις Βορείου Ἠπείρου διαδίδουσιν ὅτι προχωροῦντος Ἑλληνικοῦ στρατοῦ γίνωσι σφαγαὶ ἐν Βορείῳ Ἠπείρῳ καὶ ἀντίποινα. Ἀπήντησα ὅτι Ἑλληνικὴ διοίκησις θεωρεῖ ἱεράν τῆς ὑποχρέωσιν λάβῃ ὅλα μέτρα ἐκεῖνα ἅτινα ὑπαγορεύονται ἐκ τῶν περιστάσεων ἵνα μὴ πάθῃ οὐδεὶς Ἀλβανός. Ἑλληνικὸς στρατὸς καὶ Ἑλληνικὴ διοίκησις θὰ περιφρουρήσῃ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ περιουσίαν τῶν Ἀλβανῶν. Τὴν δῆλωσίν μου ταύτην ὁ Ἀλβανός ἀπεσταλμένος ἤκουσεν εὐχαρίστως, προσθέσας μάλιστα ὅτι εἰς τοὺς Ἀλβανικοὺς κύκλους ἀπήχησεν ἐνθαρρυντικῶς ἡ πληροφορία ὅτι Γενικὴ Διοίκησις ἀπεμάκρυνεν

πολλοὺς ὄπλαρχηγούς ἐξ Ἡπείρου. Εἰς ἐκφρασθέντα φόβον ὅτι εἴμπορεῖ Ἑλλην στρατιώτης νὰ ἐκτραπῆ εἰς βιαιοπραγίας εἶπον ὅτι Στρατιωτικὴ διοίκησις θὰ πατάξῃ ἀμειλίκτως κάθε παρεκτροπὴν. Ὁ ἀπεσταλμένος προεξοφλήσας τὴν συγκατάθεσιν τῆς Ἀλβανικῆς κυβερνήσεως ἐδέχθη ὅπως ὁ Μητροπολίτης Δρυινοπούλεως ἐπανέλθῃ εἰς Ἀργυρόκαστρον ἵνα ἀποτελέσῃ τὸ ἐνωτικὸν σημεῖον Ἀλβανίας καὶ ἡμετέρων πρὸς πρόληψιν διαδηλώσεων τοῦ φανατισμοῦ τῶν ἡμετέρων. Ὁ κ. Κότσης ἐτόνισεν ὅτι ἀφ' οὗτου ἀπεχώρησεν Ἰταλικὸς στρατὸς ὄχι ληστεία, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἡ ἐλαχίστη κλοπὴ διεπράχθη ἐν Β. Ἡπείρῳ καὶ ὅτι αἱ ληστεῖαι διεπράττοντο ἄλλοτε συνεπεία τῆς ἐγκληματικῆς ἀνοχῆς τῶν Ἰταλῶν, οἵτινες εἶχον τὴν στρατιωτικὴν κατοχὴν καὶ οἵτινες ὄφειλον νὰ ἐλάμβανον τὰ κατάλληλα μέτρα. Ἐπληροφορήθη ὅτι ἡ Ἀλβανικὴ κυβέρνησις φρονεῖ νῦν ὅτι ἡ Ἀμερικανικὴ προστασία δὲν κατέληξεν εἰς ὄρισμένον ἀποτέλεσμα, ὅτι οὐδεμία συνεργασία ὑφίσταται μεταξὺ Σερβίας καὶ Ἀλβανίας, ὅτι ἀπεκρούσθη βολιδοσκοπήσις περὶ Ρουμανικῆς ἐντολῆς, ὅπισθεν τῆς ὁποίας οἱ Ἀλβανοὶ διαβλέπουσι τὴν Ἰταλίαν καὶ ὅτι ἡ μόνη ἐλπίς τῶν Ἀλβανῶν ἀπομένει εἰς τὰς ἐνεργείας τῆς ἐπιτροπῆς τῶν Ἐξωτερικῶν ὑποθέσεων τῆς Ἀγγλίας, ἣτις συμπαθῶς ἐργάζεται ἐν Λονδίῳ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀλβανικῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας. Ἀπεκδέχομαι ἐπειγόντως ὑμετέρας ὁδηγίας.

Γενικὸς Διοικητὴς Ἡπείρου
ΚΑΛΕΥΡΑΣ

Ἐλήφθη τῇ 14/27-5-20
Ὦρα 23.15'.

3.

Ἀπόλυτος Προτεραιότης

15-5-1920

Γενικὸν Διοικητὴν

Ἰωάννινα

Ἐγκρίνομεν καθολοκληρίαν δοθεῖσαν παρ' ὑμῶν ἀπάντησιν εἰς ἀπεσταλμένον Ἀλβανικῆς κυβερνήσεως. Εἶναι παρ' ἡμῖν βαθεῖα ἡ συναίσθησις ὅτι Ἑλληγες καὶ Ἀλβανοὶ συνδέονται στενότερα ὄχι μόνον ὡς οἱ ἀρχαιότεροι τῶν κατοίκων τῆς Βαλκανικῆς ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ κοινῶν αἰσθημάτων ἀκόμη δὲ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ γεγονότος ὅτι ἑκατοντάδες ὄλοι χιλιάδων πολιτῶν τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ κράτους εἶνε καταγωγῆς ἀλβανικῆς, διατηροῦντες ἀκόμη τὴν μητρικὴν τῶν γλῶσσαν καὶ κατέχοντες τὰς ἀνωτάτας θέσεις ἐν τῇ Πολιτείᾳ, τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ τῷ στρατῷ. Ὅ,τι χωρίζει τοὺς δύο λαοὺς σήμερον εἶνε τὸ ζήτημα ὅπερ ἡμεῖς μὲν ὀνομάζομεν τῆς Β. Ἠπείρου οἱ δὲ Ἀλβανοὶ ζήτημα Νότιας Ἀλβανίας. Εἰλικρινεστάτη εὐχὴ μας εἶνε ὅπως ἡ Ἀλβανία δυνηθῆ νὰ ὀργανωθῆ εἰς ἀνεξάρτητον καὶ βιώσιμον συνταγματικὸν κράτος. Θὰ εἴμεθα δὲ εὐτυχεῖς ἂν κατὰ τὰ πρῶτα βήματά της εἰς ἀνεξάρτητον βίον δυνηθῶμεν νὰ τῇ παράσχωμεν τὴν ἠθικὴν καὶ ὕλικὴν ἀκόμη συνδρομὴν μας ἣν ὀφείλει πρεσβύτερος εἰς νεώτερον ἀδελφόν. Ἀλλ' ἡ εὐθύτης ἐπιβάλλει νὰ δηλώσωμεν ὅτι δὲν δυνάμεθα νὰ μετέλθωμεν ἀντιταλικὴν πολιτικὴν. Ἐπιθυμοῦμεν καὶ μετὰ τῆς Ἰταλίας νὰ διατηρήσωμεν σχέσεις ἀγαθῆς γειτονίας, πιστεῦομεν δὲ ἄλλως τε ὅτι κοινὸν συμφέρον Ἑλλάδος καὶ Ἀλβανίας εἶνε ἡ διατήρησις φιλικῶν σχέσεων μετὰ τῆς γείτονος Μ. Δυνάμεως. Περιττὸν νὰ προσθέσω ὅτι εὐχαρίστως θὰ δεχθῶμεν τοὺς ἀποσταλησομένους τυχὸν ἀντιπροσώπους Ἀλβανικῆς κυβερνήσεως πρὸς περαιτέρω συνεννόησιν.

BENIZEΛΟΣ