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GREEK REACTION TO DEVELOPMENTS LEADING TO THE ALBANIAN LEAGUE OF PRIZREN*

Greek diplomatic and consular reports have scarcely been utilized by scholars of Albanian history¹. Yet, they provide a wealth of information, because in 19th century, Greeks and Albanians maintained close ties: and also, because Greeks paid particular importance to lands inhabited by Albanians, as they provided a doorway to the Balkan Slavs, particularly the Montenegrins and Serbs.

Prior to the Eastern Crisis of 1875-1878, Greek consulates existed in Arta, Preveza, Janina, Santi Quaranta, Valona, Argyrocastro, Durazzo. With the outbreak of the insurrections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, new consulates were set up in Berat and Skodra. In Korcha and Elbasan, however, the Porte refused permission, apparently fearing the expansion of Greek political activity in Albania². From these consulates, as well as from those in Monastir and Thessaloniki, the Greek Government was kept well informed on the movement of the Albanians. Additional information was also forthcoming from other posts, namely Constantinople, Bucharest and even Alexandria, where Greeks maintained friendly and even family relations with Albanians.

The prevailing view among 19th century Greeks, which somehow is reflected in the consular dispatches, was that Albanians and Greeks were kin peoples. Being small in numbers, compared to the Balkan Slavs, they could not survive as separate entities, but were bound, one way or another, to form a unified state. The example of Austria-Hungary exerted a strong influence in that direction. Another argument that seemed to support this idea, was the case of the Albanian-speaking Orthodox Christians residing in the Greek Kingdom.

* This paper was read at the conference on the 100th anniversary of the League of Prizren (1878), held at Prishtina, 6-10 June 1978. It is published here with the permission of the organizers.

1. A recent study makes an extensive use of these archives. See: Eleftheria Nikolaidou, *Foreign propagandas and the Albanian National movement in the Dioceses of Durazzo and Velegrada; end of 19th and beginning of 20th century*, Janina, 1978 (in Greek).

2. Archeio Ypourgeiou Exoterikon (AYE), File, "Constantinople Embassy 1876", Kontostavlos to Koundouriotis (Constantinople), No. 9206, 8/20, Oct, 1876.

These Christians had a long tradition of association with the Greek cause — particularly during the Greek War of Independence — and had, since, been fully integrated into Greek society. Furthermore, the fact that a similar process was underway among Albanian-speaking Orthodox Christians residing in Ottoman-held Macedonia and Epirus, was, to the Greeks, a further indication, that the two people could coexist under a common state roof³.

Understandably, these notions were shared by most Greek consuls serving in Epirus and Albania. As a result, in their reports on Albanian developments, they tended to take a negative attitude of foreign propaganda among Albanians, and, in addition, to view with much skepticism signs of an Albanian national awakening.

Among the Greek consuls, one who prided himself as being an expert on Albania, was Epaminondas Mavromatis, Consul at Skodra since 1876. Among his main tasks, when he assumed duty in his faraway post, was to brief his government on the various Albanian groups and to assess their prospects in future political developments, keeping, of course, in mind, long-range Greek interests. In his view, the Albanian population in the 'seventies, did not exceed 1-1,2 million and was divided as follows: The *Catholics* (110-120 thousands), who lived compactly in the north, were not strong enough - from a political and economic point of view - to provide the unifying element for all the Albanians. Their aloofness from their fellow Moslem Albanians and the lack of powerful and wealthy families, were elements that reduced their chances of ever becoming a Piedmont for Albania. The *Moslem Albanians* (estimated at 600-700 thousands) considered the Christian element as inferior to themselves, and detested the idea of falling under the influence of the Catholics. Mavromatis believed that they were more likely to cooperate with the Orthodox Christian Albanians, with whom, most of the Moslem Tosks were related. Nevertheless, the Moslems were themselves divided, because of the individual interests and quarrels of their leading families, as well as because of animosities and suspicions cultivated among the various religious sects. As for the *Orthodox Christian Albanians* (estimated at 300-400 thousands), Mavromatis believed that they could not easily align themselves with the Catholics, as they were under stronger Greek influence.

3. Evangelos Kofos, *Greece and the Eastern Crisis, 1875-1878*, Thessaloniki, 1975, pp. 24-25.

On the contrary, because of their wealth, their weapons and especially their close relationship with the Tosks, they could play a leading role in any political movement⁴.

The view generally held by Greeks was that prior to the Eastern crisis of 1875-78, the various uprisings of the Albanians were mainly instigated by Moslem Albanian beys who were, above all, eager to safeguard their privileges from the infringing tactics of the Porte. They did not have a national character, and they did not aim at challenging Ottoman authority in their lands. This, in Professor C. Paparigopoulos' view, explains why during the various uprisings the Orthodox Christian Albanians, who did not enjoy the same privileges, had declined to join the rebels, and, indeed, had, on occasions, sided with the Ottoman authorities⁵.

Understandably, the Greeks considered the Christians as closer to them, and the element more likely to side with the Greek cause in case of a political settlement in Albania. This view was expressed also by the British Consul at Skodra Kirby Green when he wrote to the Foreign Office:⁶

«In Middle and Lower Albania the Christian Albanians look toward Greece, not towards Italy, for freedom and advancement. The Greeks do not pretend that they are pure Hellenes and call them Albano-Greeks, but they are just as much Greeks as the Piedmontese are Italians, and I can assert from personal intercourse with numerous Middle and Lower Albanians that no wish whatever exists for union with Italy, or an impracticable kingdom under the sceptre of a problematical descendant of Scanderberg. They prefer to go many steps further back in history, and recall that under Pyrrhus and Alexander the Great the world then counted them as Greeks.

4. AYE, File 99/1, 1876, Mavromatis to Kontostavlos, No. 22, 5/17 Oct. 1876. It is interesting to note that another consul, P. Matarangas of Santi Quaranta, attributed the kinship of Christians and Moslem Liaps to the fact that most of the Liaps had been Christians until, in Ali Pasha's time, they were forced to become Moslems. AYE, Unnumbered file, "Consular Reports and Dispatches, 1878", Matarangas to Delyannis, No. 41, 28 May 1878.

5. AYE, Unnumbered File, "Consulates in Macedonia, 1883", C. Paparigopoulos, President of the Association for the Advancement of Greek Letters to Prime Minister Charilaos Trikoupis, No. 773, 25 June 1883.

6. FO421/30, K. Green to Salisbury, April 22, 1878.

Besides, they have proof that in modern Hellas the children of the Albanian heroes of the war of independence from Spetzia and Hydra and other localities have been awarded their proper place and share in the government and advantages of freedom».

The events of 1875-1878, however, compelled the Greeks to take a more pragmatist view of the Albanians. Some of the Greek consuls were able to detect movements for Albanian autonomy. According to Petros Logothetis, Consul at Monastir, the idea of an Albanian autonomy in Northern Albania had been initiated and cultivated by certain followers of the Anglican Church who operated in the districts of Durazzo, Tirana, Elbasan and Starovo. The idea was welcomed by certain beys but had failed to reach the Moslem masses, who, prior to the Eastern crisis, had a vague notion of a national state⁷. Mavromatis, on the other hand, reporting from Skodra, verified the fact that the concept of national statehood had begun to win over first the more educated among the Albanians. A serious drawback, however, for turning theory into practice, he believed, were the contradictory influences of the foreign Powers. This, in his view, was the major disruptive element of the Albanians' desire for a separate autonomous state⁸.

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The uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875 opened the way to a rapprochement between the Balkan peoples. The Serbs, in 1876 proposed an entente to the Greeks, and at the same time they informed them that they had made similar feelers to Romanians, Montenegrins and Albanians. The Greeks were not ready to respond positively. And, in addition, they looked with suspicion at Serbian initiatives in Albania. Foreign Minister Alexander Kontostavlos replied that Greece was not yet ready for an entente. But if she decided to act, she would act alone in Albania, because, as he put it, "the Albanians are linked with the Greek race with many and unbreakable ties". Serbian interference there could prove dangerous and could introduce conflicting aims⁹.

7. AYE, File "A-W, 1879", P. Logothetis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 87, 18 Feb. 1879.

8. AYE, File 99/1, 1876, Mavromatis to Kontostavlos, No. 22, 5 Oct. 1876.

9. AYE, File "Belgrade Consulate General, 1875-1878", Kontostavlos to Doskos, No. 4057, 11 Feb. 1876.

It was precisely this mentality that led Mavromatis, in 1876, to take a negative attitude toward Montenegro's territorial claims to the south. In his view, Greek interests would be better served if Prince Nicholas were involved in Herzegovina and kept out of Albania¹⁰.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Alexander Koumoundouros, a pragmatist and a strong advocate of an all-Balkan cooperation, had sent secret emissaries to Epirus, Southern Albania and Corfu to contact individual Albanian chiefs, for instigating joint revolts against the Turks¹¹. While these initiatives continued, the new coalition government in Athens opened negotiations of a political nature with certain Albanian leaders, among them Abdul bey Frasheri, Mehmet Ali Vriوني and others. Greece was offering alternatively Albanian self-rule within an expanded Greek state, or a form of a dual Monarchy under King George, more or less on the lines of Austria - Hungary. As a last offer, she could recognize and assist an Albanian principality, provided, however, this principality did not include Epirote territories. On the other side, the Albanians argued in favour of a large Albanian principality, which would include the whole of Epirus. To the Greeks residing there, they would offer extensive self - government. Such a principality could be associated with the Greek Kingdom with a strong alliance.

These talks which had started in Janina in July 1877 — mainly between E. Mavromatis and Abdul bey Frasheri — had continued in Constantinople in December — with Stefanos Skouloudis as the Greek negotiator — and ended in failure in Corfu, early in February 1878, as the Russo-Turkish war was brought to its conclusion with the Adrianople Armistice¹². As a last gesture, the Albanians proposed to set aside the boundary issue until after the war, and asked the Greeks to be supplied with weapons and money for a joint action against the Porte. The divergent long-range objectives, however, had created deep suspicions on both sides, and neither was willing to back from what it considered its basic and fundamental theses. With the Russo-Turkish war over, and with Greek uprisings in Thessaly, Crete, Epirus and Macedonia just beginning, there could hardly be a chance to foment

10. AYE, File 99/1, 1876, Mavromatis to Kontostavlos, No. 27, 2/14, Nov. 1876.

11. E. Kofos, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

12. Greek correspondence on the talks held in Janina and Constantinople was published by M. Spyromilios in "Greece and Albania: an attempt at a Greek-Albanian rapprochement during 1877-1878", *Neos Kouvaras*, Athens, 1962 (in Greek). Some additional information in E. Kofos, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-147.

a Greco-Albanian front against the Porte. On the contrary, the Greeks felt that now the Albanians would more likely side with the Ottoman army in subduing Greek uprisings in Epirus. Under the circumstances Prime Minister Koumoundouros sent the following telegram to Skouloudis in Corfu which reveals the changed climate of the Greek-Albanian negotiations:¹³

"I think it is very dangerous to cooperate in the establishment of a hostile power on our flank. The Albanians are Turks [meaning: loyal to the Ottoman State], they have common interests with them, and they have benefited from them. Why should they side with us? With us they hope to achieve the establishment of their own nationality. They lack, however, the means, and they ask us to provide them, in order to achieve their aims... The danger is that we will arm a people who contest the land from us. If they revolt alone, occupy the contested regions, and — thus organized — present their claims, how can we oppose them? Especially if we are obstructed from taking an active part in the hostilities, we run the risk to set loose a wild, untrustworthy people, whose interests conflict with our own. This is the risk we run if we do not solve, in our favour, beforehand and in a safeproof manner the boundary issue, receive concrete assurances of their sincerity, and compel them publicly and formally to declare themselves in favour of our common program. You have observed their insistence on refusing or sidestepping all these points, which if we do not get, we could injure instead of promoting, our national cause. Strive to remove these obstacles, and before you do so, abstain from concluding anything definite".

As it was revealed later¹⁴, the Greek Government, early in 1878, had began to entertain serious doubts whether the Albanian beys, with whom it was negotiating, had a sufficient representative status capable of binding their compatriots to a definite political arrangement. This development, along with the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish armistice, and the realization that no progress had been achieved on the issue of the final political settlement, brought the negotiations to an end.

13. AYE, File, "Greek-Albanian Negotiations, 1878", Koumoundouros to Noma-
march of Kerkyra and Stefanos Skouloudis, 3/15 Feb. 1878 (cyph. tel.). This te-
legram was partially published in Kofos, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

14. AYE, File "Consulates in Macedonia, 1883", Ministry of Foreign Affairs
to the Association for the Advancement of Greek Letters, No. 960, 19 July 1883.

Thus, while the treaty of San Stefano was being signed, the roads of the Greeks and the Albanians had departed. The Greeks had attempted an invasion into Thessaly, but recalled their army, the moment the signing of the armistice became known. Yet, the Greek insurrections, which had been breaking out in Crete, Thessaly, Macedonia and Southern Epirus, were allowed to continue and were even encouraged. A small Greek force landed in Santi Quaranta, early in March, but was quickly squashed by Ottoman forces from Janina and irregular Albanians. In the district of Delvino, thirty Christian villages were pillaged and set on fire¹⁵. On the other side, the Albanians, weighing the consequences of the San Stefano treaty, began to consider drastic action, independently of the Porte, both in the military and political field.

The San Stefano treaty, raised great fears among most of the Balkan peoples, and prompted them to register their opposition. Greek communities, for instance, in Thrace and Macedonia signed numerous petitions against their incorporation into a large Bulgarian state¹⁶.

Likewise, the Albanians began to put to circulation for signing their own petitions. According to S. Maratos, the Greek Consul at Argyrocastro, the idea of petitions had originated with certain Albanian pashas in Constantinople. Local Moslem leaders had attempted to collect signatures and community seals on white pieces of paper to be filled out later and dispatched to the European Congress. The attempt failed on account of differences among Moslem leaders and the opposition of the Christians. The mufti of Argyrocastro made it known that he had received a telegram from Janina signed by Abdul bey Frasheri, Roustem Tselia Pissari, and Bekir effendi Vourga, who informed him that the Christians and Moslems of the districts of Janina and Preveza were willing to sign petitions against the cession of Epirus and Thessaly to Greece and urged him to do the same in Argyrocastro. But Maratos reported that nothing came out of this plea¹⁷.

15. Miltiadis Seizanis, *The Policy of Greece and the Revolt of 1878 in Macedonia, Epirus and Thessaly* (in Greek), Athens, 1879. Also, E. Kofos, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179.

16. Evangelos Kofos, *The Revolt in Macedonia in 1878* (in Greek), Thessaloniki, 1969.

17. AYE, File "Congress of Berlin, 1878", Maratos to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 57, 10 June 1878.

These movements had raised the apprehensions of the Greeks, who feared that Albanian reaction to the San Stefano stipulations could, subsequently, turn against Greek claims on Epirus as well. As a result, the Greek Government instructed her consuls to inform the Christians to desist from signing Albanian petitions. On the eve of the Congress of Berlin, Maratos was in a position to report that all the Christians of the sanjak of Argyrocastro — including the districts of Argyrocastro, Delvino, Tepeleni and Premeti — had declined to sign the petitions¹⁸. Similar was the attitude of the Christians of the Santi Quaranta district, as was reported by the Greek consul of that town¹⁹.

From the north, however, the Greek consuls reported that the signing of the petitions progressed well. Mavromatis informed Athens that all Albanians (Moslems, Catholics, Mirdites) had signed petitions against the incorporation of Albanian lands to Montenegro and Bulgaria. In his view these petitions had the active support of the Ottoman authorities, as well as that of the consuls of Austria and Italy. He had been informed that the Italian consul had even drafted, in his own hand, a different text for the Catholic Albanians — to represent «all» the Albanians — who objected to any territorial changes. But his efforts did not meet with success²⁰.

Finally, the Greek consul in Berat, reported an increasing hostility, among Central and Northern Albanians, to the idea of any political arrangement with the Greeks. There were even certain leaders who expressed the view that if a foreign settlement were imposed, it would be preferable for Albanians to opt for a British protectorate²¹.

The problem with the petitions was a clear sign of the divergent political objectives of Greeks and Albanians. Until the beginning of 1878, Greek diplomats had been merely trying to counterbalance foreign influences among Albanians and cultivate close ties with them. Now, their efforts were directed at minimizing Albanian nationalist initiatives, lest they would turn against the long-range interests of Hellen-

18. AYE, File "Consular Reports and Dispatches, 1878", S. Maratos to Th. Delyannis, No. 50, 27 May; No. 57, 10 June; No. 62, 17 June.

19. AYE, File, "Consular Reports and Dispatches, 1878", Matarangas (Santi Quaranta) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 May.

20. AYE, File, "Skodra Consulate, 1878", Mavromatis to Delyannis, unnumbered 4/16 June 1878, and No. 12, 5/17 June 1878.

21. AYE, File "Consular Reports and Dispatches, 1878", Evangelides (Berat) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 35, 22 March.

ism. This attitude is clearly portrayed in Greek consular and diplomatic dispatches of that period.

An interesting illustration is the Greek attitude toward Albanian-Montenegrin relations. Two years prior to the 1878 developments, the Greek consul at Skodra wished the Montenegrins to keep out of Albania. Now that Montenegro — as well as Greece — were faced with an identical refusal by the Porte to abide by the decisions of the Congress, Mavromatis was eager to advise an entente between Montenegro and Greece so that both would exert pressure and acquire the lands assigned to them by the Congress. This, naturally, meant lands which the Albanians strongly contested from the Montenegrins as well as from the Greeks²².

The Greek Government had been receiving ample indication of the mounting Albanian opposition to her claims in Epirus. Already in March 1878, through an Epirote Greek in Constantinople, it had learned of Vassa Pasha's memorandum to the Ambassadors of the Powers²³. As is well known, that memorandum spoke of the Albanians' willingness to resist the terms of the San Stefano treaty, and demanded the establishment of an Albanian principality, including the whole of Epirus.

But the real flood of news concerning Albanian nationalist movements began to reach the Greek capital on the eve of the convocation and during the Congress of Berlin. The main channels of information on developments in Upper Albania and Macedonia were the consulates in Thessaloniki and Skodra and to a lesser extent the consulate at Monastir. Of the events in the south, most of the information was provided by the consulate at Janina, as well as the sub-consulates in Berat, Santi Quaranta and Argyrocastro.

The first report of the assembly in Prizren was sent on 7/19 June by Constantine Vatikiotis, the Greek Consul General at Thessaloniki. Vatikiotis had received information, via Veleš, of Albanian beys and pashas from Skopje, Kunstendil, Veleš and Štip converging on Prizren for the purpose of assembling a miliraty force to resist a possible cession of their lands to other Balkan Christians. There was talk of

22. AYE, File "Skodra Consulate, 1878", Mavromatis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 2, 22 March, and No. 11, 29 May.

23. AYE, File, "Constantinople Embassy, 1878", Koundouriotis (Constantinople) to Delyannis, No. 783, 18/30 March 1878 (secret).

forming seven military corpses to be ready to march toward five different directions. The Ottoman authorities were aware of this activity, and there were rumours that they encouraged it. Vatikiotis, however, cautioned against accepting on its face value this information, but he assured his Minister that an armed resistance by the Moslem inhabitants of the region was a likely possibility. A week later, with more concrete news, which included the names of the representatives, Vatikiotis appeared more confirmed in his suspicion that the Porte was behind the Prizren convocation, with the possible encouragement of Austria and Italy²⁴.

From Monastir, just a few days later, Petros Logothetis reported that the agitation among the "Ottomans" — as he put it — had reached a peak over the past weeks. Despite the initial hesitation of the Monastirioties to endorse a project of confederation which would include Kossovo, Upper Albania and Monastir, the "Ottomans" of Monastir elected suddenly two representatives who immediately left for Prizren. Logothetis believed that an independent "Ottoman" force was being created, although the local authorities professed ignorance²⁵.

Closer to the scene, Mavromatis directly informed Foreign Minister Delyannis, already in Berlin, that "a state within a state" was already functioning in Prizren, where 17 beys from Prishtina, upper, lower and reka Dibra, Tetovo, Jakova, Teslitza(?) and Mati had formed a kind of a provisional government; that new delegates from Skodra, the mountain tribes and the Mirdites had been dispatched; and that money was collected to prepare an army of about 100,000 men. As for the Mirdites, Mavromatis had learned that initially their representatives had been handpicked by the Ottoman authorities without the consent of Prince Bib Doda. Less than a fortnight later, Mavromatis had secured more trustworthy information and could now confirm that the Mirdites actively participated in the League, that their Prince had received the title of Pasha of the Albanians, along with four others, and that he was a strong advocate of Albanian nationalism. Indeed, in private talks with the Greek consul, the Prince had

24. AΓE, File, "Consulate of Greece in Thessaloniki; Confidential Reports, 1878", Vatikiotis to Delyannis, No. 546, 7 June 1878, and No. 576, 13/27 June (File "Congress of Berlin").

25. AΓE, File, "Consulate of Greece in Monastir, 1878" Logothetis to Delyannis, No. 183, 11/23 June 1878.

claimed that Albania was composed of the four vilayets of Skodra, Monastir, Kossovo and Janina with a total Albanian population of nine million, and he wanted the consul's opinion on whether the provisions of the Berlin Treaty could still be considered as valid, in the event of the Albanians deciding to act as a separate nation²⁶.

Mavromatis, as most of his colleagues, held the view that the Ottoman Government had actively encouraged the proceedings in Prizren, while Austrian influences might have also played a role. Nevertheless, his initial reaction was not altogether negative:²⁷

“Up to a point” he wrote, “this state of mind could be to our interest. If, however, it assumes greater proportions, if it assumes a pure and rather wide Albanian nature, if the beys of Middle and Lower Albania also go to Prizren, which until this moment has not happened, then it will acquire a serious and dangerous influence on important Greek interests”.

In general lines, Greek consular reports on the League of Prizren, tend to adopt the view that the convocation of the meeting in Prizren was to the knowledge of the Ottoman Administration, if indeed, it were not inspired by the Porte, and even encouraged by Austria and possibly Italy. Mavromatis appeared to be more positive, although he could offer no concrete proof, or even strong evidence in support of his suppositions. Reports from the consuls at Monastir and Thessaloniki tended to corroborate this assessment, but only so far as it concerned the knowledge — not the connivance — of the Ottoman authorities.

Later, when Mehmet Ali was killed, Mavromatis took the view, that the incident was due to the duplicity of the Porte, which on the one hand had incited the Albanians to resist the decisions of the Congress, while on the other, it sent Mehmet Ali, “to certain slaughter” in order to show to the Powers that it had no control over the rebellious Albanians²⁸. This interpretation, however, was refuted by Am-

26. AYE, File “Congress of Berlin”, Mavromatis to Delyannis, semi-official (mid-June, no date); and Mavromatis to Koumoundouros No. 19, 19 June/1 July 1878 (File 61/1a, 1878).

27. AYE, File unnumbered, “Consular Reports and Dispatches, 1878”, Mavromatis to Koumdouriotis (Constantinople), No. 22, 26 June 1878.

28. AYE, File “Embassy at Berlin, 1878”, Mavromatis to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1/13 Sept. 1878 (cyph. tel).

bassador Alexander Koundouriotis who, with better insight, wrote that although in the beginning the Porte had, indeed, encouraged popular resistance, after a while, it had realized that by pushing things to the extreme, it ran the risk of loosing control over the Albanians. This was precisely the reason why it had dispatched Mehmet Ali, hoping to calm the situation²⁹.

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During the months of uncertainty which prevailed throughout 1878, and especially prior and immediately after the convocation of the Congress of Berlin, the unexpected emergence of an Albanian question had taken the Greeks — as indeed most foreign Powers — by surprise. Their instinctive reaction was either to minimize it, or to attribute it to foreign and Turkish instigation. Undoubtedly there was some truth in this assessment. Gradually, however, as the Albanian movement showed strength and stamina, despite its ups and downs and its internal dissensions, more sober appraisals were voiced. This happened a few years later, in 1881, when the Porte had found itself compelled to use stern military measures to squash Albanian insubordination and open revolt. At that time, the Greek Government of Koumoundouros, facing the possibility of an open conflict with the Turks, sought to reach an understanding with the Albanians. He cabled his Consul General at Thessaloniki to go north and examine the possibilities of reaching an agreement with the Albanians. He believed that if the Albanian movement became stronger, "a certain action and collaboration between Greeks and Albanians could be possible", adding that "we have a sincere interest for Albania and we will not refuse her our support"³⁰.

The course of events at the time did not allow the realization of such a collaboration. But the Greeks, on more than one occasion, sought to reach a political understanding with the Albanians. The events of 1875-1878, and particularly the formation of the Albanian League of Prizren had helped them establish a clearer view of the Albanians as

29. AYE, File "Circulars and Telegrams to Missions, 1878", Koundouriotis (Constantinople) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 2633, 12 Sept. 1878.

30. AYE, Unnumbered File E, sub-file "Consulate of Thessaloniki, 1881", Koumoundouros to P. Logothetis (Thessaloniki), No. 806, 5/17 April 1881 (tel.), and Logothetis to Koumoundouros, No. 364, 11/23 April 1881.

a separate nation, and thus set their policy on a more realistic basis. It is worth quoting in this respect a report by a new Greek consul at Skodra written in 1883, which so differs from Mavromatis' earlier accounts:³¹ "The Albanians", he wrote, "have an unburning urge for overthrowing their yoke and becoming self-governed.... In fact, they do not belong to anyone, and have no other aim but to achieve at all cost their autonomy".

And in 1886, the Greek bishop of Korcha made the following appraisal of Abdul bey Frasheri's activities, in a long confidential report to the Greek Government:³²

"Abdul bey worked sincerely for the unification of both Christian and Moslem Albanians, residing in Epirus and Macedonia, and for raising them to the status of a [modern] nation, with their own Principality. For this he sacrificed riches and official posts; he suffered privations and exile, and lost everything. He did not ignore that his efforts had little chance of succeeding, and he probably knew what was in store for his person. But, to all those who tried to warn him of the consequences, he would firmly reply, that he was sowing the seed as best as he could, so that others may reap the harvest".

Finally, an eminent Greek authority, Professor Constantine Paparigopoulos, who as a historian and president of the Association for the Advancement of Greek Letters held an influential position in Greek society and politics, in a report to Prime Minister Trikoupis in 1883, took a very critical attitude of former Greek policy toward the Albanians. He proposed that, in view of growing Albanian nationalism, Greece had only two alternatives: either to seek the establishment of an autonomous Albanian principality under a common — with Greece — king and parliament; or to encourage the establishment of an independent Albanian principality joined to Greece by a permanent alliance. If the latter course were adopted, then the Greek Government should cultivate friendly ties with the Albanians, starting with the teaching of the Albanian language in Greek schools in Epi-

31. AYE, File "A-W, 1883", sub-file "Consulate at Skodra", Report unnumbered, 30 April 1883.

32. Copy of report by the Bishop of Korcha Filotheos, 1 September, 1886, in AYE, File "Albanian Question — Consulates in Macedonia, 1886".

rus, Albania and wherever else Albanians lived. The thorny issue of Epirus could well be disposed with by a plebiscite³³.

All these views indicate that a general reappraisal of the Albanian factor had began to take place among leading Greeks after 1878. Old ideas did not vanish overnight. But a start had been made. It was not very difficult to trace this gradual development to the Albanian movement of the 1870's, and to the League of Prizren in particular.

33. AYE, File "Consulates in Macedonia; Association for the Advancement of Greek Letters 1883", Paparigopoulos to Trikoupi, No. 773, 25 June 1883.