

# Albania in the Last Decade of the Ottoman Occupation According to French Diplomacy During the Years 1901 – 1911

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## Abstract

France in the first decade of the twentieth century, will be very active in European and Balkan events. At the same time, French diplomatic documents reflect a complete picture of Albania in the first decade of the twentieth century, in the context of the occupation of the Ottoman Empire. The interests that Austria and Italy have in particular are analyzed by the side of a state that was in the opposing camp, the Triple Alliance camp. But in the French documentation it is clear that one of the most delicate conflicts between Austria and Italy was the influence that each of these two countries of the Central Bloc sought to influence the Albanian territory. Albania was seen as a springboard to the southern Balkans and the only thing that prevented Austria and Italy from entering the conflict was the preservation of Albania's status quo and the influence of Germany seeking at all costs to keep the Central Bloc in cohesion. France through its diplomacy sought to damage the Central Bloc, to stimulate the connection of new alliances in Europe, wanting to promote rapprochement between Italy and Russia, but the latter's high interests in the Balkans, made Russia create for itself agreement with Austria, really worrying France. Interesting is the fact of diplomatic treatment by France of the situation in the Balkans and the opinion that French diplomats have about Albanians. Being more pro-Slavic in the diplomatic side, she sees critically how the Austrians were using the Albanians to oppose the Balkan peoples, mainly the Serbs. On the other hand, French diplomats criticize the Ottoman attitude, which maintained a mild attitude towards Albanians, explaining it with the fear that the Sultan himself has, given that part of his guard was Albanian. Thanks to this period and the French diplomacy which does not have a direct involvement in the Albanian issue, we see with great interest not only a panorama of the Albanian situation but also of the hidden European interests, which emerge through the influence on the Albanian territory as a strategic position.

**Keywords:** French diplomacy, Albania, Ottoman Empire, Triple Alliance, Central Bloc.

## Introduction

Knowledge of the history of Albanian territories during the last decade of the Ottoman occupation of Albania, is very valuable if seen from the side of French diplomacy. The French who are not directly interested in Albanian lands, give us a clear description and analysis of all the main protagonists, who have direct interests in this western area of the Ottoman Empire.

The clearest interest that emerges from these documents is the interest of the Austrians, which within this last Ottoman decade, only grows, passing from the general Balkan interest, to direct territorial interests for the Dualist Monarchy. As early as the 1900s the French realized that the Albanian area was the only area in the Ottoman Empire where the Austrians could extend direct interest. This was also due to the orientation that the main state of the Central Bloc, to which Austria also adhered, Germany had left in the direction of exerting influence, as in other areas towards Eastern Europe, the latter needed to extend to vete. The Albanian part of the Balkans increasingly began to take on a strategic importance for Vienna after the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, giving it two important favors; first: control of the Otranto canal, as an entry point into the Adriatic Sea, and second, an intermediate point towards the road to Thessaloniki.

The French documents show that the Austrians, in connection with the importance of the area, are trying to bring the Albanian population into the Novi Pazar sanjak, as a support population for Vienna, wanting to separate the Slavic population of Montenegrins from the Serbs, seeing how a connecting cordon with the Bosniaks he had under occupation.<sup>1</sup> The Austrian interest is even greater than that of the Russians during the conflict that may have occurred between the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro in 1911, by the French. For the fact that for Austria Albanian lands are a direct interest, while for the Russians they are seen as an interest in maintaining a balance in the Balkans.

The Austrians use propaganda mostly to gain their own interests and to follow the Albanians. They send military attachés to the city of Ioannina and measure and analyze the area in terms of geographical relief and the maritime area. Even in this city in terms of propaganda has entered into conflicts with the Italians who also seek it for themselves. But the best propaganda is the one made through the water lines by the Austrian sailing company Lloyd. This company has connected every Albanian naval pier with the ports of Europe, although it has a great cost for the budget of Vienna, but the propaganda and political importance that is in the foreground, does not allow it to stop this activity.<sup>2</sup> Apparently the French see that through these actions,

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XIII (26 octobre 1910-30 juin 1911)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1955., doc. 358.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome IV (5 octobre 1903-8 avril 1904)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1932., doc. 269.

the Austrians make an analytical study of Albanian territory, trying to highlight how useful it can be for their economic interests.

The French documents also show the use that Austria is making of the religious side of the Albanians. Despite the fact that Albanians were part of two religions divided into four religions, the latter in each religion know how to behave, bringing them in favor of their own interests. Southern Albanians in the Islamic faith, especially those in the Ioannina area, are lured by money,<sup>1</sup> while in the north Catholic Albanians are used and propagated to defend themselves against the Ottoman Empire. However, wanting to preserve and protect Muslim Albanians, in order to bring them closer to their side, they are risking a Catholic transition to Italian influence, Paris notes.

Austrian actions were not always direct in fulfilling their goals. Not infrequently Austria used other states to achieve these goals, as was the case of Montenegro. During the uprising in the mountains of northern Albania in 1911, a deeply Catholic area that had had mutual support with the Austrians, within the Great Powers, French diplomats, also informed by the Serbs, said that Austria encouraged Montenegro to support Albanians. Montenegro held several thousand Albanian highlanders inside fleeing its province after the anti-Ottoman uprising, and presented itself as a mediator with the Ottoman Empire to bring peace between them. On the other hand their maintenance required large expenditures, from which the French thought that King Nicholas of Montenegro was supporting them with Austrian money.<sup>2</sup> By doing so, the Austrians were seen as cooling down Montenegro's relations with Serbia, keeping it tied behind their backs, somewhat isolating it from Italian influence.

But Vienna's influence over Albania extended as far as Istanbul, where French diplomats note that the intervention of the Austrian ambassador to Istanbul, Pallavicini, was so frequent that it was often seen as an insult even by the Ottoman foreign ministry. But the Austrians used this method because they knew that an Albanian uprising at the time of the post-revolutionary riots of the Young Turks would further weaken the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> But despite the great support from the Austrians, the French notice that there is a rift, in which Archduke Franc Ferdinand himself gives a great and persistent support to the Albanians and Count Aehrenthal, tries to have a reservation from the open support, not wanting to upset the balance with Italy.

The Austrian position in the Kosovo area was also criticized. The French are worried about the support that the Austrians are giving to the Albanians of this province, to be harsh towards the Serbs of this area. It can even be seen that the Austrians are encouraging the Kosovars to rise up even against the respect of the sultan in order to

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XI (15 mai 1907-8 février 1909)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1950., doc. 336.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XIII (26 octobre 1910-30 juin 1911)", doc. 229.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1939., doc. 255.

bring instability so that he can intervene later. When it came to Serbs and the behavior of Albanians, the French maintained a position with the Russians, who had more direct interests in their defense, and where the Russians were the first informants of Austrian actions against the Serbs, through the Albanians. The support of the Albanian attack on the Serbs was also noticed in the territory of Bitola. The French even note that for their own purposes Austria in Kosovo, given that there is a dominance of the Islamic faith among Albanians, supports this group more even in the face of Albanian Catholics, even when the latter are wronged by the Ottomans, or Albanians of the Islamic faith.<sup>1</sup> The French also justify the Serbian concern that very soon Vienna to cross to Thessaloniki will not pass from Mitrovica but from Belgrade, where the Serbs can not resist for more than a month.

Meanwhile, regarding Ottoman policy in Kosovo, Vienna is trying to intervene. The Austrians feared that the unrest in Kosovo could lead to an uprising against the Ottomans as early as 1903, so in that case Vienna would have to intervene.<sup>2</sup> At the same time in the Mürzsteg Agreement between Austria and Russia, to undertake some liberalizing reforms in the Ottoman Empire on October 2, 1903, the Austrians said that the Kosovo Albanians did not welcome this, although the Austrians themselves did not want the Kosovo area to be affected. far from reforms.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Albanians had not accepted these reforms because they demanded that Christians not be included in the Ottoman army, even protesting in Mitrovica led by Isa Boletini. While 7 years later in the general uprising that took place in Kosovo, Austrian support for the Albanians was seen by the French as very low. French diplomats note that since the takeover of Bosnia by the Ottomans in 1908, the Austrians have been more cordial with Istanbul. Through this, the French also explained the lack of interest shown by Vienna in the Kosovo uprising in 1910, leaving without support an area that had invested to incite it against the sultan 7 years ago.<sup>4</sup>

Another city that the French see as an expansionist influence in Albanian lands was Skopje. This city, which was included in the accounts of the Macedonian cause, was a good strategic point for the Austrians. It was seen by the French as the end point of the invasions that went from Bosnia to Prizren and stopped in Skopje, as well as an exit point from Skopje to the Shengjin pier on the Adriatic coast. But even here he was exerting influence through the Albanians, through the Austrian schools and the expulsion of the Serb population, and above all by stimulating the Albanian Catholic clergy, which was like an enclave between an Orthodox and Islamic area.<sup>5</sup> Although at

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome II (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1902)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1931., doc. 401.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1931, doc. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Rahimi, Shukri. "Lufta e Shqiptarëve për Autonomi 1897 - 1912", Mitrovicë: Progres, 1980., pg. 118.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XIII (26 octobre 1910-30 juin 1911)", doc. 52.

<sup>5</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome I (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1901)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1930., doc. 526.

first sight aid to Skopje was seen as aid to the Bulgarians, in fact Skopje was becoming more and more an Austrian city.<sup>1</sup> The Austrians even opposed the Ottomans, who had left the areas of Skopje or Bitola, during the elections in the Ottoman Empire of 1904, to be controlled by its silent rival, the Italian state.

The attitudes and interests of the Italian state over the Albanian vilayets are very well expressed in the analysis of French diplomacy. The Italians had similarities to Austrian politics and even often held the same attitude or used the same tactics as the Austrians, but only for their own interests. The Italians are also seen by the French as not wanting any Slavic state, especially Montenegro and Serbia, to approach the Adriatic coast in the Albanian part.<sup>2</sup> Among the Italians there are two groups related to interests in Albania, one is for the growth of economic interests, but maintaining the status quo of Albanians under the Empire, while the other group wants to be more active and wants either Tripoli or Albania to be invaded for the interests of tire. The Italians also wanted at all costs to establish themselves in Albanian territories, not leaving it alone under the influence of a single large European power, as seen in Austria. French diplomats even noted that Albania would take on greater importance for Italy if German influence in the Hellenic state led to a strengthening of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Austria. At such a moment the Italians would sacrifice Tripoli for Albania.<sup>3</sup> Albanian territories and the conflict with the Ottomans began to interest more and more Italians, during the time that Italy went to war with the Ottoman Empire, because it wanted to create instability within the empire. Such a thing was noticed a lot after 1910 by French diplomats. So Rome began to become more active in helping the Albanians with weapons, in the uprising.

Like Austria, Italy in 1901 began to consider investments in Albanian territories, starting with the telegraph to connect the Albanian coast, but also including it in the agenda of the Italian Parliament. Even in front of Istanbul, through her ambassador, she demanded that reforms be taken, as in the Vilayets of Kosovo and Bitola, as well as in the Vilayets of Shkodra and Ioannina, vilayets that had direct interests of Italian diplomacy.<sup>4</sup> Even the French consul from Ioannina in 1904, says that in this area the Italians are paying attention to the Albanians of the Islamic faith, seeing them as more militant to promote them and use them in the side of their own interests. It is seeking political support from Albanians through the creation in the future of an Albanian principality with a prince under Italian influence, and it mentions the Spaniard Alehandro Castrioti, of Albanian origin from the family of Gjergj Kastriot. On the other

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XII (9 février 1909-26 octobre 1910)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1954., doc. 601.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome I (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1901)", doc. 4.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XI (15 mai 1907-8 février 1909)", doc. 63.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." , 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome II (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1902)", doc. 522.

hand, Italy is trying to use the influence of the Italian-Albanian colonies in Calabria and Sicily, who are interested in the fate of the Albanians of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

But Italy tried to be fruitful in the field of education, to increase its influence on Albanians. This is done openly and secretly. The French consul in Shkodra (center of the vilayet of Shkodra), Mr. Alric, was secretly asked to open an Albanian school in Mirdita, with Italian subsidies and to use the Albanian language. This secrecy was required, due to the fact that France had influence and opportunities to act in Mirdita, and on the other hand did not want to oppose its ally Austria which was interested in Catholic areas. The insistence was so great that Italy undertook to pay the individual debts of the French consul if it managed to issue such a permit.<sup>2</sup> Another area where Italian influence was coming through education was Vlora and Ioannina, where Italian vocational and art schools were opened in these cities, where they were maintained by the Italian state budget and had a high attendance, which was growing from year to year. For the arsim investments in the Albanian vilayets, the French noticed.

Germany, the main country that kept the Tripartite Alliance alive, is seen by French documents as having a weak and indirect interest in Albanians. Even the French ambassador to Germany, Mr. Bohourd, says that in a meeting in Berlin, the German ambassador in Istanbul called the Albanians wild,<sup>3</sup> which showed that they did not even have sympathy for the Albanians. The Germans were even afraid of the Albanians with their attitudes towards the Empire because the Albanian uprisings could require new talks between Tripala's allies. However, in 1911 the Germans also acknowledged that the Albanians were a factor in the international aspect, as long as the events in Albania influenced the Moroccan issue, where Berlin was involved with interests.

They had the most interest in helping the Austrians in the Albanian areas. Germany had given its support that after the Congress of Berlin in 1878, it should extend to the southeast, towards Bosnia and the lands further south. Reforms in the Ottoman territories seemed absurd to Germany, but it tried to support Austria in its interests within this empire.<sup>4</sup> Berlin even wanted to agree with Italy to give it Sarajevo, only for the latter to give up its interests in Albania.<sup>5</sup>

But the Germans seek to maintain at all costs balances in the interests between its allies Austria and Italy in Albanian territories. It never seeks to establish a hegemony of Austrian politics in Albania, putting the Italians out of the game.<sup>6</sup> Berlin often made its statements public in the German press in order to resolve the situation and to send

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome V (9 avril-31 décembre 1904)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1934., doc. 21.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome I (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1901)", doc. 505.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", doc. 365.

<sup>4</sup> Pllana, Emin. "Kosova dhe Reformat në Turqi, 1839 – 1912", Prishtinë: Rilindja, 1978., pg. 169-170.

<sup>5</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XI (15 mai 1907-8 février 1909)", doc. 448.

<sup>6</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome II (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1902)", doc. 236.

messages to the two allies, stating that despite the interests of the two allies, the alliance between them was strong. The Germans also tried to soften the rivalry between the allies by restraining to some extent the Austrians when they became more diligent in their interests in Albania.

French diplomacy carefully observes that the relations between Italy and Austria are not so synchronized between them in the Albanian territories, even though they belong to the same camp. The Italians try to act as an antithesis of Austrian actions in the country. Rome since 1901 demanded that the telegraphic communication it had with Montenegro be extended to Shkodra, although this will not be well received by its ally. Paris even thinks that the deceptive Austrian policy was making Italy lose a lot in the Albanian territory, because Austria was acting through propaganda and the use of the Catholic clergy.<sup>1</sup> Italy did not receive support from the Catholic clergy because it supported Austria, but from Albanian intellectuals who had begun to lose faith in the Austrians.<sup>2</sup> At the same time another area of rivalry was Epirus, where the Austrians sought to take precedence even in education in this area, wanting to have control of the Otranto canal, the strategic point that both allies expressed rivalry actions in this area for this reason.<sup>3</sup> The Austrians, even if they did not express it in diplomatic actions, often attacked Italy in their press for their behavior in Albania. Thus expressing a dissatisfaction with their presence in these vilayets.

The Italians themselves, in order to avoid the open conflict, had expressed their neutrality in Albania in 1901, trying not to create incidents between the allies. The French diplomats even openly expressed to the Italian ambassadors that Austria is an enemy in your interests, both in the Julian Alps and in the Albanian territory. In the event of a conflict in the East, Austria would rely on Germany and would not support the Italians.<sup>4</sup> But this conflict, which fluctuated between silence and behind-the-scenes work, often worried the German Foreign Ministry, which for a decade tried to call on both sides to bring them closer to their interests in the Albanian area. During the period 1909 - 1911, when the Albanians began to get involved in strong opposition and uprisings against the Ottoman Empire, French diplomacy saw that these two countries accuse each other of inciting Albanians without their knowledge.

Very interesting is the point of view of French diplomacy, after recognizing the facts of the silent conflict between Austria and Italy. For the French diplomats in Vienna, the relationship between the two countries varies between hatred and distrust, to any event or exceeding of competencies in Albania, it seems to them a *casus belli* to start a conflict between them.<sup>5</sup> French diplomats even predict that Italy would be puzzled if Austria crossed from Novi Pazar to take all of Albania and leave for Vlora (a city that

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome I (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1901)", doc. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Buxhovi, Jusuf. "Kosova Vëll. II Perandoria Osmane", Prishtine: Faik Konica, 2012., pg. 372.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome V (9 avril-31 décembre 1904)", doc. 21.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", doc. 129.

<sup>5</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 161.

had a direct connection to the closure of the Otranto Canal). The French ambassador in Paris, Barrere, had spoken directly to the Italian foreign ministry, saying that the Austrians flatter you, and act for themselves. Such behavior and statements by the French are undoubtedly a diplomatic way of enticing, to make the Italians side with the French, but many of these predictions will come true, only a few years later.

The French make an accurate description of the German role and actions to orient its allies to avoid conflict. They say that Germany wants both Austria and Italy to maintain the status quo in Albania, because an autonomous Albania would increase rivalry between them. Really the only moment when the rivalry between the two calmed down, happened when both these countries agreed to maintain the status quo of Albania under the Ottoman Empire. The main goal, which Italy wanted to maintain the status quo, was only not to gain more in an Albanian autonomy Austria. She even vehemently opposed this as early as 1901, stating that never a state, which is composed of citizens of Islamic and Christian faith, can ever be able to govern itself.<sup>1</sup> Justification through religious danger, made the behavior of Vienna insecure, since it within the empire in the Albanian vilayets was responsible for the protection of Catholic Christians.

However, both of these countries were aware of each other's strength and the damage they would suffer, so for almost the entire decade they maintained peace only by maintaining the status quo over the Albanian vilayets. Despite the fact that Albanian pro-Italian groups in Italy tried to encourage the Albanian people to demand autonomy, the Italian state tried to curb these initiatives.<sup>2</sup> Even the tendencies for an open autonomy, the French see expressed between the two allies only in 1906, when it is hypothesized that if there will be dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, then there will be an autonomous Albania.<sup>3</sup> The non-realization of this maneuver for the whole decade under consideration, French diplomats see as connected with the financial difficulties that Vienna has. Not being able to invest in such a moment, she fears that it will be exploited by Italy and its interests will be ruined.<sup>4</sup>

Austria did not remain fully loyal and cooperative to Italy when it came to the policies to be pursued on the Balkan Peninsula. She knew that one of the main states with high interests and quite active on the peninsula was especially Russia. The closest political reconciliation between the two countries would be after the Mürzsteg Agreement on reforms in the vilayets where the majority of the population was Albanian. Cooperation even goes so far as to ask Istanbul to bring Ottoman armies over Albanian areas to allow the implementation of these reforms. But more than a co-operation was a Russian tactic, according to the French pursuing Vienna. Paris was amazed at how

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome I (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1901)", doc. 365.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome II (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1902)", doc. 201.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome X (10 avril 1906-16 mai 1907)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1948., doc. 372.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 161.

Russia allowed it to penetrate so deeply into the Epirus area, Austria with its influence. But Austria used two favors, the first being the confidence it had received from the Russians after the Mürzsteg agreement, that just as Moscow and Vienna were simultaneously seeking reforms in the Balkans, so they were willing to cooperate. And the second element was the Austrian opportunism which took advantage of the moment when Russia was engaged in fighting in the Far East,<sup>1</sup> not having many opportunities to directly influence or oppose the Albanian territories. But the Austro-Russian influence and relations for the Albanian territories had also worried Istanbul. The sultan himself had demanded new reforms in these territories during 1905, from British financiers, in order to remove this action from the hands of these two allies.<sup>2</sup> However, both Moscow and Vienna never stopped communicating together and drafting reforms for the Albanian vilayets and presenting them to Istanbul, projects which remained unanswered and without approval. But Albanians also began to feel disappointed by Vienna, especially after the takeover of Bosnia in 1908 by Austria, where it was said that Russia itself had allowed it, in exchange for the silent surrender of any Albanian part to the Balkan states that supported Russian interests.<sup>3</sup> The Russian attitude starting from 1901 and going towards the end of the decade of Ottoman occupation, intensifies more and more in the Albanian problems. In early 1901 and during the early years Russia was more preoccupied with Orthodox religious problems amid its dominance through bishops that it would establish in Serb-influenced Orthodox centers such as Mitrovica, even though it was an Albanian-majority city. Mitrovica is counted in the territories where Russia wanted to exert influence over the Serbs through the establishment of the metropolis, although the Serbs themselves oppose this. The situation continued in Bitola or Skopje, where in order to maintain its dominance in Skopje, Russia sought to establish a Serbian metropolis, removing the Bulgarian one, whom it did not trust as its own.

But the full influence and interest of the Russians in the documents of French diplomacy is more noticeable during 1909 and onwards. As early as 1909, the Russians drafted a plan which received the approval of the High Gate, to dry up the fields around Lake Shkodra, where it was attempted to gain a large area of agricultural land from both the Albanian and Montenegrin sides.<sup>4</sup> From the way the events unfolded in the next three years in the conflict situation that was created by Montenegro and until the occupation of the city of Shkodra by the Montenegrins during the First Balkan War in November 1912, it can be seen that this plan was well thought out. The Russians through this sought to inject their influence and an investment into an area of one of its allies such as Montenegro.

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2<sup>e</sup> Série (1901-1911) Tome V (9 avril-31 décembre 1904)", doc. 207.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2<sup>e</sup> Série (1901-1911) Tome VI (2 janvier-6 juin 1905)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1935., doc. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Buxhovi, Jusuf. "Kosova Vëll. II...", pg. 371-372.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2<sup>e</sup> Série (1901-1911) Tome XII (9 février 1909-26 octobre 1910)", doc. 264.

However, the French see them as reserved in the direct involvement of the Russians in the Highlanders' uprising of 1911, seeing the Albanian conflict with Istanbul as an internal affair of the Ottoman Empire. When in fact the Russians saw that it was not a relationship except between the two sides, she knew that the Montenegrins were advised by the Austrians to support the Albanians. The French understood that Russia also wanted to get involved in this situation, but there are fears of direct involvement from the Austrians, who were also taking Montenegro's safe ally on their side. But the Russians are already realizing that Albanians are becoming an international factor not only in the Balkans but also in Europe through their insurgent war. Russian diplomats told their French counterparts that if the conflict between the Ottomans and the Albanians was not resolved by March 1912, the event would involve the Balkans and Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Through French diplomacy we also understand the relations beyond the European blocs between the states when the common interests approached. This time we can analyze very well the agreements between Italy and Russia when it came to Albania's problems. Throughout the decade, Italy tried to compromise Russia in its interests in the Balkans, when it was impossible for it to openly oppose Austrian interests in Albania. To the French, the Italian diplomats themselves had stated that they would rather see Russia on the Adriatic coast than Austria in Albania.<sup>2</sup> This is also related to the strategic territory that Vienna required in the Albanian area, having also the area of the Otranto Canal, where the sea neck of Italy was. But the French themselves welcomed Italy's rapprochement with Russia, and through it with the Entente camp. They stated that if Italy severed relations with Austria due to Albanian interests, it could form a New Alliance in the Balkans with Russia, or even Serbia, where it could unite the issue of Bosnia or the Albanians who were under Austrian influence.

Whereas in 1909, at a time when any kind of interest or connection between the parties in interests began to intensify, between Russia and Italy in the conversation between the foreign ministers of the two countries Izvolsky and Tittoni it was accepted that no clause of the Triple Alliance, prevented the establishment of an agreement between the two countries to maintain the status quo in Albania. The rapprochement between Italian and Russian interests occurred when both sides sought to exclude from the reforms in Macedonia the vilayet of Shkodra and Ioannina, where were the interests of Italy but also that of Kosovo and Bitola, where there were interests of Serbia, and for which Italy was gave support.<sup>3</sup> Through French diplomacy we also understand the interests of the Russians that are hidden behind the Italians. Russian Minister Izvolsky himself stated to the French ambassador in Saint Petersburg, Louis, that in case the status quo is not maintained, we are to make territorial changes to help the Balkan states, while the Italians want the border

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 393.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 294.

<sup>3</sup> Buxhovi, Jusuf. "Kosova Vëll. II...", pg. 441.

between the nationalities to be preserved. This Italian policy, although it seems somewhat outdated, for the Russians it is in the interest of keeping Italian politics close, it is enough to exclude Austria.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that the Russians were using the Italians only to divide the Central Bloc, and that Italian interests in guarding ethnic Albanian borders were of no value to Russia.

But the French ambassador in Rome also welcomes the rapprochement between Italy and France. The French even predicted that a rapprochement of a nationalist line that could bring Germany and Austria closer together could well bring Rome closer to Paris. This could happen without fear on the part of the Italians, knowing that the French had no direct interests in Albanian territory, especially when Austria turned Italy into a second-hand power in the Adriatic.<sup>2</sup> The French themselves thought that Russia's rapprochement with Italy to split the Vienna-Rome relationship would disappoint the diplomats in St. Petersburg, but on the other hand sought to get closer to the Italian plans in Albania. These plans, although not at all close to French interests, were approved by Paris in the hope that they could influence new groupings of continental powers in Europe,<sup>3</sup> which meant influencing the cooling of the axis between Rome and Vienna. France always saw Italian politics in the hope of bringing it closer, and it was even against the support that the Russians began to give to the Austrians in the area of Manastir during the 1904 parliamentary elections in the Ottoman Empire. This is also due to the fact that they began to see the first rapprochement between the two powers with direct interests in the Balkans.

French diplomacy also feels dissatisfied with Austrian policy in the context of the religious protection it provided to Albanian Catholics in the context of the cult protectorate. The French are worried that if a French priest in the Albanian area were to stand trial, should she wait for this French Catholic priest to be defended by Austria, this action seems quite insulting to remain in the hope of Austria. Also the French ambassador in Istanbul, indirectly accuses his foreign minister of never intervening to be more active in regaining the protection of Catholics who had had it centuries ago than the Austrians within the Ottoman territories. Another criticism was given to the Austrians in Albania for the fact that Vienna gave the Albanian Catholics only religious protection, but never gave them a general or political protection, as the French had given them throughout the time they were defending the province of Mirdita.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, they see early on that Albania for Austrian interests will become a Tunisia of the Balkans,<sup>5</sup> giving the same values that Tunisia has for French interests on the North African coast, and as a result the French saw the support of Balkan interests as

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XII (9 février 1909-26 octobre 1910)", doc. 340.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome V (9 avril-31 décembre 1904)", doc. 212.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", doc. 278.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XI (15 mai 1907-8 février 1909)", doc. 579.

<sup>5</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", doc. 270.

positive. Russians to the Austrians, although St. Petersburg for years cooperated with Vienna, yes for Balkan interests.

In French diplomatic documents, there is always an opinion about Albanians that they are very militant. The French openly state that they would feel insecure if French soldiers were stationed in an Albanian constituency to maintain order in 1904. On the other hand, also in talks with German diplomats during 1911, they say that the conflicts started by the Albanians in The Ottoman Empire, could set fire to the East.<sup>1</sup> France also sees the involvement of Great Britain in the problems of the Ottoman Empire in relation to the conflict that exists with the Albanians as a haste. She thinks that should be left first to be resolved between countries that have these problems for decades under consideration, such as Austria and Russia. Whereas the demands of England to the Ottoman Empire for education, weapons and fiscal taxes to be liberalized towards the Albanians are seen as untimely, because some of these have been regulated by the parties themselves. While other requirements that England requires such as the provision of water communication channels, is not seen as an Albanian requirement, it is even thought that Albanians are not interested in navigation channels to be included as a requirement. French diplomats think that after the Albanian demands, the British seek to introduce their interests, even in the Albanian area.<sup>2</sup>

Relations between Albanians and the Ottoman Empire are not infrequently seen as benevolent. The French in diplomatic correspondence between them, complained that the sultan treated the Albanians well. He treated them kindly and did not attack them, even for the reforms that the Ottoman Empire approved in 1901, they say that the sultan himself paid for the monastery of Deçan in Kosovo to the Serbs.<sup>3</sup> When in fact it is not at all so. As early as 1902, the Ottomans brought troops to Kosovo to quell any dissatisfaction among the Albanian population with the reforms that benefited most Serbs there. He even asked the clerics of the Islamic faith to persuade the Albanians of the Islamic faith to stay away from national actions, because they were threatened by Christians.<sup>4</sup> French diplomats personally linked the sultan's reluctance during the first months of 1903 to send troops to suppress the uprising in Kosovo to the sultan's conduct. They linked him for two reasons: first, because he saw them as the most devout subjects of the Islamic faith towards him,<sup>5</sup> and second, he was afraid of causing resentment among a people whose main door guards of his palace were Albanians.<sup>6</sup> This meant that he was afraid of the assassinations against him that the Albanians could do. But the sultan soon overcame his insecurities and, as he told

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XIV (1er juillet-4 novembre 1911)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1955., doc. 353.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XIV (1er juillet-4 novembre 1911)", doc. 372.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome II (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1902)", doc. 539.

<sup>4</sup> Rahimi, Shukri. "Lufta...", pg. 115.

<sup>5</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", doc. 164.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, doc. 164.

French diplomats, when he was sure he could completely defeat the Albanians in the area from Prizren to Gjakova, he sent 27 battalions with 5 artillery batteries, ordering their arrest and deportation to Asia. Small up to 300 people from resistance leaders.<sup>1</sup> But the Kosovo Albanians were against it like the upper strata of the beys because it would deprive them of some of the privileges they had, as well as the new bourgeois or simply commercial strata because in these reforms they saw the raising of taxes on them.<sup>2</sup> While the French diplomats had created a panorama that the Albanians were already avoiding any imperial obligation and that the Albanians obeyed and depended only on the local beys, while in fact writing and books in the Albanian language were not allowed until 1909, and that personalities acting against the Ottoman Empire had to emigrate outside the Ottoman territories because they could be imprisoned.<sup>3</sup> French diplomacy has a very interesting prediction since 1908, regarding the relationship between young Turks and Albanians. Although the delegate of the Macedonian financial commission, Mr. Steeg, describes an enthusiastic atmosphere from Skopje that Albanians show in Skopje after the announcement of the new Ottoman constitution, the forecast for the future is sadder. He thinks that the young Turks deceived the Albanians by using their enthusiasm, for whom the constitution meant autonomy, so in the first moment that the young Turks will seek to make a new and centralized administration in Albanian lands, the latter will be disappointed and start the conflict.<sup>4</sup> Very soon this will be true, when the first clashes will take place between the Albanians and the new Ottoman administration, even though the new Ottomans had relied on coming to power, in the hatred that the Albanians had for Sultan Abdul Hamid II.<sup>5</sup> The interests of the Balkan states are best found in the French diplomatic documentation, not to mention her emotional feelings for the interests of the states that she might sympathize with the Balkan mosaic. Bulgarian interests in Albanian lands are seen in many ways. Bulgaria is involved in all diplomatic relations in the Balkans. It finds itself in the early 1900s, in the religious problems between the domination of Bulgarian-style orthodoxy over the Serbian one, in the Macedonian area. Although the whole game of religious domination took place in Albanian-majority cities such as Bitola and Skopje. A conflict that will only end with the support of the Istanbul Patriarchate, which recognizes Serbian domination, given the Bulgarians a closer look at Austrian influence, as it had interests in turning the two cities on its side. As for the interests in the Macedonian issue, Bulgaria is doubled between the two countries that have the most influence on Albanian lands, between the support of both Italian and Austrian policies.

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome III (3 janvier-4 octobre 1903)", doc. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Pllana, Emin. "Kosova...", pg. 174.

<sup>3</sup> Swire, Joseph. "Shqipëria Ngritja e një mbretërie", Tiranë: Dituria, 2005., pg. 78.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XI (15 mai 1907-8 février 1909)", doc. 419.

<sup>5</sup> Shaw, Stanford. "History Of The Ottoman Empire And Modern Turkey, Vol. II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976., pg. 265.

During the years 1904 - 1905, Sofia, due to the increase of Austrian domination, especially after the reforms in the Albanian vilayets, tried to cross over to Italy, asking it to remove the Austrians from the domination in the Albanian lands, and not to be interested only in the areas. southern Albanians leaving the Austrians free in the areas of Kosovo and Bitola.<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria has been reflecting this concern in its European and European press all this time. Meanwhile, during the beginning of the Albanian uprisings in 1910 - 1911, seeing that the Austrian influence was growing not only within the Albanians, but especially in decision-making moments in the Ottoman Empire, Sofia's policy pays attention to Vienna diplomacy. The Bulgarians, informed by the Macedonians about the insurgent behavior of the Albanians at the end of 1911, about an uprising in the spring of 1912 (which was talked about and expected to start by the Albanians, all over the Balkans), inform the Austrians that they support it. any Albanian nationalist movement, but demand that the area from Pirot in Serbia to Strumica be annexed to Bulgaria as assigned to it in the Treaty of St. Stephen (1878).<sup>2</sup> The diplomatic behavior of the Bulgarian King Fredinand I, on the one hand, demanded that the Austrians see Bulgaria as an ally on the side of the Albanians, and on the other hand, in the moments of the division of the Ottoman Balkan map, to take a coveted part long ago.

While French diplomats see Romania as very calm and even cold, regarding the Albanian situation throughout the decade under consideration. Bucharest was not afraid of Albanians in the first years of the twentieth century, but a revolution in Istanbul, which could overthrow the entire Balkans. Their only interest in the Albanian areas was that in any form of administration that could be established on Albanian lands, the Kutzo-Vlach community, which was of origin and with ethnic and spiritual ties to the Romanians, be treated well. While at the end of the decade, their only concern was the support that Italy was giving to Montenegro, which was interfering in the affairs of Albania, that if added would upset the balance, leaving room for more intensive intervention by the Austrians.<sup>3</sup> The most accurate picture that can be made by French diplomacy for a Balkan state, which has its own interests in Albanian lands, is undoubtedly the Serbian state. This is due to the fact that France provided support to Serbia, and at the same time the direct relations and diplomatic relations between the two countries are very intensified. Serbia itself, after Russia, saw France as the power that gave it support, reporting in every detail on the Albanian area. Serbs occasionally complain to the French about how Austria uses both Bulgarians and Albanians to clear Serb areas. The incitement of these two peoples to create conflicts with the Serbs occurred because Vienna wanted to play the first conciliatory role between the parties, to use them in favor of the policy of influence,<sup>4</sup> and this meant that the Serbs had to be guarded as by the Albanians. as well as by the

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome VI (2 janvier-6 juin 1905)", doc. 468.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 181.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 283.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome I (2 Janvier-31 Decembre 1901)", doc. 125.

Bulgarians.<sup>1</sup> Serbs are so concerned about relations between Albanians and Austrians that their plan was to invite Albanian Catholics, after Serbia's agreement with the Vatican, to leave Austrian influence and to cooperate with Serbs against the Ottomans.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it was declared to the French ambassadors that the Albanian vilayets should not be excluded from the reforms of 1903-1904, because these brought development. In the conditions when the Albanians themselves had demanded the exclusion at all costs, this showed that the Serbs were interested in the Albanians being in conflict with both the Austrians who had proposed them and the Ottomans who would implement them, consequently this would bring a rift between Albanians and Austrians.

During 1909 the Serbs declared to the Austrians that they accepted the annexation of Bosnia by Vienna, but on the condition that it allow the Serbs to take over the sanjak of Novi Pazar as well as Skopje, finally removing Bulgarian influence in the city.<sup>3</sup> This was the next Serbian negotiation in the period when the Bulgarians themselves had returned from the Austrian side, anticipating that Austrian diplomacy would be strengthened in the Balkans of Albanian lands, so they sought at all costs to support it, but also to be able to derive benefits without heating up the situation. The French did not see the benefit of the Serbs in the Albanian lands from the Austrian tolerance, but in the opportunities and spaces that the Ottomans themselves were giving to the Serbs. This is expressed in two ways. First, the Serbs exercised their influence on the Albanian lands through the Serbian metropolis of Pristina and Skopje, the latter they had managed to take from the Bulgarian influence since the beginning of 1900, after the intervention of Istanbul to pass it into the hands of the Serbs. On the other hand, they are allowed to occupy the territories from the Drini River to Lake Ohrid, so much so that the Serbs themselves admit that they have traveled a long way in the geographical borders of Albanian lands.<sup>4</sup> Serbs found on the side of the Ottomans, and being favored by Istanbul, often expressed to the French the concern that, like Bulgaria, Montenegro was falling on the side of Austro-Hungarian politics. The Serbs had started a conflict with Montenegro, because the former did not support the policy that Cetigne was pursuing on behalf of Vienna, keeping the Albanian highlanders as refugees, after the anti-Ottoman uprising of 1911. Because the extension of Austrian influence in the Montenegrin area to that Albanians closed the coast to Belgrade.<sup>5</sup>

Montenegro's attitude and political maneuvers are also in the spotlight of French diplomacy. Montenegro since the beginning of 1902 is seen as having annexation goals for the Shkodra region, although there are ethnic differences with the local

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.É., "Origines De La Guerre De 1914 Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914) 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome VII (7 juin-28 septembre 1905)", Paris: L'Europe Nouvelle, 1935., doc. 313.

<sup>2</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome VII (7 juin-28 septembre 1905)", doc. 322.

<sup>3</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XII (9 février 1909-26 octobre 1910)", doc. 186.

<sup>4</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 2" Série (1901-1911) Tome XIII (26 octobre 1910-30 juin 1911)", doc. 270.

<sup>5</sup> M.A.É., "Origines..." 3" Série (1911-1914) Tome I (4 novembre 1911-7 février 1912)", doc. 311.

population.<sup>1</sup> The French even see as ridiculous the appearance in the Montenegrin press of the claim of the Montenegrin princely family for the throne of Albania, but they understand the need for the northwestern Albanian areas, Montenegro. The latter is also seen as concerned as Serbia, about the penetration of Austrian influence in Kosovo, but the support to stop it, which he did not find in his son-in-law, the King of Italy, he occasionally hoped to get from Germany itself, where in 1908 went directly to meet him for this work. While Italy, for its part, according to French documents, used Montenegro, also as a family link between father-in-law and father-in-law, to obtain information from Cetigne on Albanian areas, where this country was a good connoisseur of Albanian lands.<sup>2</sup> However, the rapid dynamics of events in the Balkans, made Montenegro like other countries to change direction and orientation, in favor of their own interests. Montenegro is mostly seen by the French in connection with the events of 1911, and with the support it gave to the Albanian highlanders against the Ottomans. The French see that Cetigne is playing a double game with both the Ottomans and the Austrians, but supports the latter. The Ottomans themselves declare to the French that it was the Montenegrins themselves who supported the Albanians, forcing Istanbul to send troops<sup>3</sup> when the French complained in favor of the Montenegrins about the presence of armies on the Ottoman-Montenegrin border. However, the French admit that the Montenegrin game is run from Vienna and with Vienna money, for Albanian purposes.

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