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Aspects of the Albanian Political Pluralism in the Period of 1914 - 1924

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to further enlighten one of the most important phenomena of the Albanian political life, the case of political pluralism during a particular period of historical development, during the years 1917-1924. A special contribution in this historical and political process was given by the Albanian Diaspora, especially intellectuals and patriots, who were experienced and had analyzed the factors that determined and contributed to the development and progress of countries who were in this aspect.

This process in Albania according to the years that we are referring to, is divided into two phases. The parties that were created and were active during 1914 – 1920, first of all had the task of rescuing the Albanian State's territorial integrity by further partitions, the creation of the independent Albanian state, without neglecting the correction of historical injustices that were made at the expense of the Albanian people and the Albanian ethnic grounds. These "political parties" were created and operated mostly abroad.

There was the powerful phenomenon movement for the creation of political parties in Albania during 1920 – 1924.

KEYWORDS: pluralism, political parties, democratization, occidentalism

INTRODUCTION

Soon after the Declaration of Independence on November 28th 1912, the Independent Albanian State started its own life. In front of the Albanian National Movement and all Albanians, especially the Albanian intellectual elite, patriotic and nationalist ones, emerged the duty of rebuilding, organizing, and consolidating the Independent Albanian State. They began thinking, and projecting ways of how to build the new state. At the forefront of this process stood the Albanian Diaspora in America, which had recognized and experienced the ways and the factors that affected and determined the path of development and progress of the USA. They tried to exploit and apply their experience for the construction and development of the new Independent Albanian State.

Since early, on 28th of April 1912 the Albanian Diaspora in America founded in Boston the "Vatra" federation. Its story of creation, activity and its valuable and important contributions given to the national issue, have been generally treated with a highly scientific competence by the academic Beqir Meta in his monograph "Vatra (Meta B. 2001)" FEDARATION, therefore I will not focus on this problem. But what I would like to emphasize is the fact that the "Vatra" Federation was the first patriotic society of Albanian emigrants in the US, which created a series of branches in the US, and in the same time was one of the largest, the most important and the longest existing society in the whole Albanian Diaspora(Albanian Academy of Science, Albanian Encyclopedia Dictionary, 2008), which through its organization and union of the Albanian emigrants gave the example of the union and organization of the national political activity in the interest of their own nation. But soon after the creation of an independent Albanian state the first World War broke out (1914-1918) between the two military blocs, whose forces invaded Albania, and transformed its territory into a battlefield between them dividing its territory into three occupational zones. After the end of First World War a Peace Conference was held (1919-1920). These important world events disrupted the lives of the independent Albanian state and changed the course of its historical-political development, and even seriously threatened its territorial integrity and existence. For Albania and the Albanian national movement it started a new era where the historical process had new tasks and content. So our point of view for the period of 1914-1924 will be divided into two stages: the first stage, 1914 to 1920, and the second stage in the years 1920-1924.

FIRST STAGE 1914 – 1920

The first stage 1914-1920, the first phase of which included the years 1914-1918 when during the First World War 1914 - 1918 the independent Albanian state was conquered by the armies of the fighting blocks and was divided into three occupational zones, and the Second stage, in the years 1919-1920 during which the Peace Conference in Paris was held where the Balkan's neighboring countries developed new plans for any further disintegration of the Albanian territory. These were the political circumstances and factors that defined the strategy and tactics of the Albanian national movement.

The Parties or the political organizations that were created and acted during the period of 1914-1920 and the national movement in general as their primary task had the rescuing of Albania and the entire Albanian territorial state from further disintegrations, the recreation of the independent Albanian state, and correction of injustices that were done at the expense of the Albanian people and the Albanian ethnic territories. Despite being in a state of conquest by foreign military forces, it was created in Durres the first political party (named "National Party") in order to organize and lead the national movement for the protection and the stabilization of the Albanian state (Albanian Academy of Science, Albanian Encyclopedia Dictionary, 2009), but due to difficult circumstances, it acted in a complete illegality and its activity was very limited.

In those circumstances when the political situation did not allow the development of the national movement within the country, the national movement was developed and operated abroad, mainly in Diaspora where a significant role and an important political - historical contribution was given by the Albanian "Vatra" Federation that was created on 28th April 1912 and the "Albanian National Political Party" that was created in 27th of August 1917 in Worcester Mass in the USA. During the 1914-1920 stage the Albanian Diaspora in the US apart from the systematic efforts of saving Albania from any further disintegration, it also thought of the organization and the development of the political life of the Independent Albanian State.

Among them it was created and consolidated the idea of the necessity of building and organizing a pluralist political life in the Albanian state, in a notional and organizational basis, as a conditional and an essential factor for its development and progress.

The first who publicly declared in the press his point of view of pluralism and the creation of political parties as a necessity and a political-historical need for the development of the new Albanian state was Kristo Dako, who wrote at the "Library - Voice of Albania", which was published in Southbridge Massachusetts, USA on June 15th 1916 that: "Every government, every society in order to prosper needs the parties, parties need organization and every organization needs leaders who take the initiatives and give a direction to its organization."

Kristo Dako words were directed to the Albanians or order to implement these requests which were dictated by the needs and interests for the development and progress of the Albanian state. The Albanian Diaspora in America was the first which created an Albanian political party named "ALBANIAN NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTY" on 27th of August 1917 in Worcester Mass, led by the Sevasti Dako and later by Kristo Dako.

The party announced two of its basic documents, The Canon law and the regulation of the "National Political Party", which were first published at the first number of the Party's press organ, in the "Albanian" newspaper, which first began its publication on the 28th of February 1918. These two main party's documents constituted its own program, and proclaimed the main objectives of its political and organizational activity. They should be judged and evaluated in the context of the time, in the historical and political context that prevailed at the time, in relation to the duties and historical interests of the Nation and of the Independent Albanian State.

At that time Albania and the Albanian nation was threatened by major and newer risks, by the intentions of neighboring chauvinist circles of any further disintegration of the territories and the Albanian people. The motherland should be saved by the dangers threatening it. Being aware of its historical mission that it was undertaking, the National Political Party with its political program, it answered to this vital and historical need of the Albanian Nation.

Through its published program, it publicly declared its commitment and determination that "It would try by any means to escape the coveting of the neighboring countries, not only in the territories which were inside the borders assigned at the London's conference[1], but also to the territories which were unjustly detached by the Albanian's body and were given to Montenegro, Serbia and Greece (Mita, R., Kordha, H.: 2011)". This was the Party's purpose and goal, a nationalist purpose and aim, a realistic and objective attitude.

So the "Political Party" was committed to engage not only in the salvation of Albania from any further disintegration, but also in the protection of the Albanian's integrity, which implicated the correction of injustices that were done to Albanian ethnic territories and its population. The "National Political Party" openly and publicly declared these two political, national and patriotic goals, in front of the international diplomatic and political circles and before its compatriots, in a clear and synthetic manner since at the title of the platform where it was written: "The canon law of the Political Party for the salvation and the Insurance of the Albania's integrity."

The integrity of Albania in the political party's concept, meant the realization and the fulfillment of the centurial aspirations of generations that were sacrificed for the divine cause of the nation, forming an independent Albanian state within the ethnic territories, which would include all the ethnic Albanian territories.

"The Albanian National Political Party" founded by the Albanian Diaspora in the USA, having been created in the temple of the world's democracy and in one of the most developed and civilized country of the world, it had all the support and protection of the US in its political activity.

Historically, time and life has proven and proves that the US - has been and is the greatest supporter of the Albanian case. Even the "National Political Party", thanks to this support, was able to expand and develop its political activities for the propagation of the Albanian case at the entire public opinion and in the international organizations, for their awareness in favor of our national interests.

The political parties that were created and operated during the first stage 1914-1920, due to the political circumstances, especially the international ones, put as their priority, the duty of rescuing Albania and the territorial integrity of the Independent Albania from any further disintegration, the recreation of an Independent Albanian state and tried to correct the injustices that were done at the expense of the Albanian people and the Albanian ethnic territories.

SECOND STAGE 1920 - 1924

After fulfilling the duties of the first stage, 1914-1920, the second stage was launched and it included the years 1920-1924. It started immediately after the Congress of Lushnja. The recreation and recovery of the independent Albanian state and the beginning of its functioning, the elimination of the external risks and the creation of political internal and external circumstances, favored and allowed to all Albanian political and social forces to focus on solving the internal political, economic and social problems.

The second stage began with the Congress of Lushnja and ended in late 1924. The Congress of Lushnja with its historical decisions marked the revival of the Independent Albanian state. For Albania and the Albanians began an historical turn and the content of the political-historical process changed from that of the first stage from 1914 to 1920. The political parties that were created and functioned during the stage of 1920-1924 as a primary plan of their objectives and activities had the issue of building and strengthening the independent Albanian state in structural, legislative terms, strengthening the democratic rights and political freedom, while in the economic and social sphere, the parties had as duty the realization of a series of political, economic, administrative and social reforms, which would serve as a further strengthening and consolidation of the Albanian state, reinforcing its international positions and protecting the national rights of the Albanian population in Kosovo , Montenegro and Greece.

The main characteristic of the 1920 – 1924 stage was the great preoccupation of the Albanian society and especially of the intellectuals[2] in order to establish political parties, because they saw them as one of the most efficient ways for raising the awareness of the social forces to participate at the whole political-social movement solving and fulfilling the needs and duties that were dictated by the development and progress of the country and of the Independent Albanian State.

The Albanian intellectuals, educated at the universities of the western democratic countries, mostly in Austria, became the initiators and authors of many articles published at the main local newspapers, giving their thoughts, points of view, and alternatives to the country's development and progress and to the strengthening and consolidation of the Independent Albanian State.

During the years 1920 - 1924 in almost every city of the country there were published newspapers and magazines, (whereas in the cities as Korça, Elbasan, Shkodra, Tirana, Gjirokastra, Vlora, etc.., there were even published two, three press editions) thing that directly led to the creation and development of a broad movement of the political, social and professional organizations, which were concretized with the creation of dozens of societies, cultural and artistic clubs, connections etc, at a local or national level.

The movement for social, cultural, professional organizations, etc.., in the stage of 1920 – 1924, was so strongly developed that in every city no matter how small it was, even in large villages in all the parts of the country, there were created societies, clubs, working connections on professional basis, trade unions etc.

This so vastly extended movement, multilateral in composition, pluralist in content, and so dynamic in development, constituted one of the features of the political and social life of the years 1920 – 1924. This feature was an expression of the efforts for the democratization of the political and social life of the country. At the same time it was an expression of great concern of the intellectuals for finding and publishing the alternatives of development, the ways, means, political, economic and social reforms which would assure the progress of the country and the consolidation of the Albanian State.

This was strongly expressed by the intellectuals in the movement for the creation of political parties, which they turned into a trend and a phenomenon of the political, social life of the country. In the years 1920-1924 the political and organizational pluralism in Albania expanded and made further developing steps.

This testified and expressed the efforts for the democratization of the country's life. Many political parties and social political organizations were created.

In 1920 the "People's Party" and the "Progressive Party" were created, in 1921 the "Nation" Federation was created, in 1922 the "Union"[3] society was created, in April 1923 it was published in Baden, Austria the "National Party's Program" founded by Aqif Pasha Elbasani (The national central archive or the Republic of Albania, 151 fund, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), year 1923:24), in June 1923 in Korça efforts were made to create an "Albanian Socialist Party (Frashëri K. 2006)", but they were unsuccessful and failed, in October 1923 the "Liberal ("Politic" newspaper, Vlore, 1923, October11th)" party was created, on the 24th of October 1923 in Shkodra Nikolla Ivanaj established the "Republican (Republic"

newspaper, Shkodra, 1923, October 24th)" party, on the 3rd of 1924 the "National – Democrat Party" was created and on the 11th of October 1924 the "Radical – Democrat Party" was created.

Each of them through their programs publicly announced the ALTERNATIVE for solving the problems that were dictated by the needs of development and progress of the country. So the Albanian political scene and the social – political opinion had a pluralistic character that was expressed in a range of alternatives that competed among themselves, for the reforms and ways of the country development.

CONCLUSION

It is clearly understood that being a limited piece of writing it is impossible to dwell on a detailed analysis of the political-social programs, the objectives, the Party's statutes or regulations, neither to the elaboration of the social composition, nor to the review of the content and the character of each option that was submitted by each of them.

This paper tries to point out that political pluralism in Albania emerged since the beginning of the Independent Albanian State.

As a conclusion, it is to be emphasized that the political and historical phenomena discussed above clearly evidences that the process of political and organizational pluralism was an expression of the efforts for the democratization of the political life in Albania. Albanians during the period of 1914-1924 in the course of their historical and political developments took advantage of their experience and followed the example of the western democratic most developed countries.

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