

DIBRA CONGRESS AND THE ECHO CREATED AFTER IT

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ABSTRACT

Through this paper it is intended to shed as little light on one of the important events in the History of the Albanian National Movement, and History of Albania, Dibra Congress. Through this paper it is intended to present the circumstances in which the Congress of Dibra met, the purposes which prompted its meeting by the young men, the selection of its representatives; clashes between representatives of different ethnicities within it, as well as clashes and debates between the Albanian representatives themselves, divided into two camps, those pro-Young Turks and those pro-defense of the Albanian national cause; The decisions taken in it, as well as the echo that this congress had in the further political developments of the Albanians within the Albanian national movement. An important place in this paper is occupied by the assessments given by historians and personalities of the Albanian political life of that period on the realization of the goals for which this congress was organized and on the triumph of taking decisions of national interest in this congress.

The methodology used for drafting this paper is research, scientific research, confrontational and analytical. In compiling this article, a wide base of archival sources, historiographical literature and information sources from the press of the time has been used.

Keywords: young Turks, Dibra Congress, decisions, Albanian delegates, triumph of the Albanian national movement

1. Entry

The Dibra Congress was a Congress organized by the Young Turks in which delegates from the five vilayets of European Turkey participated; of Kosovo, Bitola, Shkodra, Ioannina and Thessaloniki. Albanian historiography, based on local and foreign historians regarding the purpose of this organization states: The Congress of Dibra according to the Albanian historian,

Kristo Frashëri, was organized by the Young Turks, in order to impose their political line on Albanians.¹

Unlike K. Frashëri, thinks the American researcher, Edwin Jacques, speaking on the Dibra Congress, Among other things, he emphasizes that the initiators for the organization of the Congress were the Albanians, while the Young Turks tried to use it for their own purposes.

In his judgment the scholar Jacques stated that: "... That July 1909, members of the Albanian Committee convened a congress in Debar to discuss the change in the political situation. The cunning Young Turks decided to use the congress for their own purposes. They filled the ranks of the congress with their delegates, armed with a ready list of decisions ... "2The American scholar relies on the fact that the Congress, in the formal aspect, was initiated by an Albanian Ottoman Constitutional Committee (Osmanlli Arnavut Meshrutijet Komission) in Debar, but that in fact behind all that organization were the Young Turks. It is important to note that the first invitations from Dibra were sent only to Albanians, creating the impression that a pure Albanian meeting would take place. But gradually all other nationalities were invited to participate with their delegates.³

The consuls of e. Expressed great interest in this congress Great Powers, especially those of Austria-Hungary, who a few days before the congress, informed Vienna of the purpose of its holding, the appointment of delegates according to the sanjaks and kazas, etc. In this regard, Consul Posfai, from Bitola, on July 19, informed Vienna of some new details, which shed light on the purpose of convening the Congress, in addition to matters such as that of Crete, that of the alphabet for Albanian, the issue of military conscription, etc. In the information conveyed by him to Vienna, among other things, he stated that: "The rally in Dibra ... is not an Albanian national manifestation ... the first from Dibra to Bitola went only to the Albanians ... (yes) little by little the "Constitutional Commission", formed the apostrophe in Debar to convene this meeting ... addressed to all other nationalities of the Macedonian and Albanian vilayets ... Characteristically, no one knows what will be the issues that will be discussed there ... ".⁴

So, from what can be understood from the report of the Austro-Hungarian diplomat, the intention of the young Turkish government to implement such a policy was clearly stated, which in fact

¹Frashëri, Kristo, *History of Dibra*, Tirana, 2012, p. 324.

²Jacques, Edwin, *Albanians - History of the Albanian people from antiquity to the present day*, Tirana, 1996, p. 296-297.

³Skëndi, Stavro, *Albanian National Awakening*, Tirana, 2000, p. 342.

⁴Verli, Marenglen, *Albanians in the Optics of Austro-Hungarian Diplomacy 1877-1918*, Tirana, 2014. p. 114; see also, AIH-Vj-19-1-181, No.53, Secret report dated. July 19 of Consul Posfai, from the Monastery to Baron Erental in Vienna.

aimed at the stability and well-being of the situation in the European Turkey, extinguishing any resistance that contradicted its governing goal.

As mentioned above, it is clear that the Congress of Dibra, which was also called as "Joint Albanian-Ottoman Constitutional Congress", which was held on 23-29 July 1909 in the city of Velika Dibra, was initiated and sponsored by the Young Turk Ottoman Government through the Young Turk Central Committee "Unity and Progress", in order to influence the Albanians by peaceful means for a more loyal attitude towards the Ottoman government. In this regard, the Austro-Hungarian consul in Bitola (Manastir), Posfai expressed his conviction that "the genuine goals of this congress were to give reassurance to the Young Turks that the Albanians do not nurture any goals for independence and any hostile feelings towards the constitutional regime."⁵

On July 22, 1909, the consul of Skopje, Adamkievic, telegraphed to Vienna that the Albanian Club of Manastir had sent an invitation to the Albanian club of that city to participate in the Dibra Congress. The following personalities were appointed as Skopje delegates: Mayor Haxhi Ibrahim Bey, Hoxha Abdyl Shadiu, Sheh Abdyl Kaderi, Abdush Efendiu. They were joined by Serb David Dimtrijevic, editor of Vardar magazine, and teacher Ivan Shantic, former dragoman (translator) of the Serbian Consulate General in Skopje.⁶ Following the telegram, the Austrian diplomat announced about the abstention of the Bulgarian club in Skopje, on the grounds that he had not been informed in time and sufficiently of the program of Congress. For the same reasons, the Albanian Catholic community of Skopje refused to participate in the Congress.⁷

For the placement of delegates coming from other Albanian provinces, the club from Dibra had designated 35 houses in the city,⁸ which testified to the hospitality and commitment of the Dibra area in the context of holding the work of the Congress and housing the delegates during the days of its work.

It should be noted that the Young Turks, namely the leadership of the Committee "Unity and Progress", made a serious mistake in his calculations when he appointed Dibra as the host of this Congress. The Young Turks considered Dibra as their bastion, forgetting that it had been one of the most important hotbeds of The Albanian National Movement, starting from the time of Tanzimat (1839), to continue with the Albanian League of Prizren (1878), the Albanian League

⁵AIH, Vj-19-10-1073, *Congress of Dibra*, Bitola (Manastir), 2 August 1909.

⁶Ibid, Vj-19-1-192, Congress of Dibra, Skopje, July 22, 1909, Adamkijevic.

⁷Ibid.

⁸“Our correspondent Mr. Hamdi Metja tells us that in Dibra a lot of preparations were made to receive those who have been invited for the day of July 10: 35 steps have been prepared for the stay of foreigners. Delegates are from every city of Sqiiperise...” “Lirija”, Thessaloniki, No. 52, 11 July 1909

of Peja and the Covenant of 1899.⁹ The rally of July 1909 proved that Dibra e Madhe not only was, but also remained one of the most important centers of the Albanian National Movement. The determined attitude of the people of Dibra came to the fore again in the autumn of 1909 when the highlanders of Reçi, Dardha, Çidhna and Lura went, under the leadership of Baftjar Doda and Selman Alia, to help the people of Lume, against whom the Ottoman army of Xhavid Pasha was poured.¹⁰

2. Opening and development of the proceedings of the Congress of Dibra

As we have mentioned above, the congress held its work on July 23-29, 1909. The Congress was attended by 322 delegates from different cities of the Albanian vilayets and from other parts of European Turkey. Most of them were Albanians of Muslim and Christian faiths. But, besides them, there were other delegates such as Turks, Vlachs, Bulgarian-Macedonian Greeks and some Serbs.

In fact, the number of delegates is not known exactly. Regarding their number, different data exist in different sources. Thus, Abdyl Ypi, who participated in the Dibra Congress as a representative of the Albanian Club of Thessaloniki, in his book: "The Congress of Dibra and H. Ali Korça", published in 1918, shed light that 315 delegates had participated in the Congress.

Regarding this participation, he further stated that: "... The delegates of the five vilayets gathered there, there, three hundred and fifteen people representing the people of the five vilayets were among the most deceased and valuable of the gentlemen ...".¹¹ Abdyl Ypi's data also coincide with those of Consul Posfai, who stated in official documents that 315 delegates had attended the Congress, of whom 95 were Christians, while most of the Muslims were of Albanian nationality.¹²

According to the historian Muhamet Pirraku, the Dibra Congress was attended by 315 delegates, who represented 19 administrative centers from the five vilayets of Rumelia: Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Bitola, Kosovo and Shkodra.¹³ Turkish scholar of Albanian descent, Sylejman Kylçe, in his book "Osmanli Tarihinde Arnavutluk" ("Albania in Ottoman history"), published in 1944 in Izmir, states that the Congress of Dibra was attended by 350 delegates.¹⁴ The number of

⁹Kaca, Iljaz, *Isuf Karahasani and his contribution to the Congress of Dibra*, Dibër, 2005., P. 166.

¹⁰ Frashëri, Kristo, *History of Dibra*, Tirana, 2012., P. 325.

¹¹ Ypi, Abdyl, *Congress of Dibra and H. Ali Korça*, Tirana, year 1918, p. 4.

¹² Verli, Marenglen, cited work, *ibid.*, P. 114; see also AIH, Vj-19-1-195, *Congress of Dibra*, Bitola, 2 August 1909, Posfai.

¹³ Muhamet Pirraku, *The political war between the two currents in the Congress of Dibra*, Dibra 2005, p. 86.

¹⁴ Süleyman Külçe, *Arnavutluk in Ottoman History*, Izmir, 1944, p. 385, *Arnavutluk'ta Islahat (Reforms in Albania)*

delegates, according to the Albanian historian Ramiz Abdyl, ranged from 300 to 322,¹⁵ while according to the newspaper "Lirija", more than 300 delegates participated in the Dibra Congress.¹⁶ Unlike all the others, the Albanian historian, Ali Vishko, in his work "Congresses of the Albanian Alphabet and School", published in 1992 by "Flame of Brotherhood" - Skopje, relying on first-hand sources, he stressed that they had participated in the Dibra Congress "A total of 322 delegates, most of whom were Albanians, while the others were attended by 30 Serbs from the Vilayet of Kosovo, 25 Macedonians (Bulgarians - B.B.), 9 Vlachs and 6-7 Turks."¹⁷ If we were to refer to Albanian historiography, then the total number of delegates was 325.¹⁸

The composition of the Congress was heterogeneous both in the affiliation of the faith and in the profession they practiced; a good number were senior clerics and landowners, clerks, teachers and school principals (Turkish and foreign) and Young Turk-leaning intellectuals, while some were senior Young Turk officers dressed in civilian clothes, such as: Zija Bey Dibra, military, Colonel Sadik Bey Janina, Young Turk Committee of Bitola, Lieutenant Major Sabri Bey Akgol, Ohrid Regiment, Riza Bey Kopliku, Major Ismail Haki Bey Manastiri, Hysen Ilmi Pasha and others. In fact, the Young Turks tried to send as many loyal collaborators as possible to that Congress, but in many cases these attempts were unsuccessful, as in many countries the delegates delegated by the Young Turks were replaced and replaced by Albanian patriots.¹⁹ The Austro-Hungarian consul, Posfai, in the above-mentioned report states that the divergence between the ideas and intentions of the Young Turk organizers, who led it through the "Osmanli Arnaut Meshrutiat Commission" and most of the delegates, who represented national interests, showed that in the beginning ". "In the Congress," the consul continues, "a current emerged against the Young Turk prestige, especially from the delegates of Bitola, Ioannina, Luma, Gjakova and Prizren" who demanded "To recognize no other power than the legislative, executive and administrative."²⁰ Undoubtedly, for this extraordinary role in the participation in the Congress of Dibra, the Albanian clubs played, especially the "Union" Club of Bitola, which called for participation in this congress, despite the intentions and maneuvers of the Young Turks.

¹⁵Abdyli, Ramiz, *Albanian National Movement 1908-1910*, Book 1, Prishtina, 2004. p. 220.

¹⁶ Gazeta, Lirija, Nr. 56, August 8, 1909, p. 2.

¹⁷Vishko, Ali, *Congresses of the Albanian Alphabet and School*, Published "Flame of Brotherhood", Skopje, 1992, p. 62.

¹⁸*Albanian Encyclopedic Dictionary ...*, *ibid.*, *Dibres Congress*, p. 1254.

¹⁹Vishko, Ali, cited work. p. 61.

²⁰Verli, Marenglen ..., here, p. 115; AIH ..

It must be said that this was the fairest, most realistic attitude that had to be maintained in those conditions.²¹

It would be unfair if we did not mention the role of the pariah, as well as the many intellectuals and patriots of the city of Dibra, who with their hospitality and direct participation, contributed to.

The Congress from a simple Young Turk gathering, to be transformed into an Albanian gathering of great historical importance. Ismail Pasha Saraçi was appointed to lead the Congress, who had previously been recommended to submit to the delegates of Congress at the time of the conduct of his work for the vote the request prepared by the Young Turk committee, that "Albanians showed solidarity with the Young Turk policy", and that they accept Ottomanism and are ready to serve the constitution.²² However, at the moment of giving the introductory and greeting speech, in the context of the opening of the proceedings of the Congress, Ismail Pasha Saraçi passed away, and for this reason the Congress stopped its work. After the death of Ismail Pasha, the mufti of Dibra, Haxhi Vehbi Dibra, was elected to lead the Congress on the second day of the "assembly" on July 24, 1909. The mufti of Dibra took over the chairmanship of the Congress, Vehbi efendi, and without doing "any formality such as the election of a committee", presented to the delegates a draft, the four points of which were elaborated by the Young Turks as a resolution, to be signed by all and to be sent as a prayer to the parliament".²³ In fact, this program, as our well-known historian points out, Masar Kodra, The Young Turks had kept it a secret until the day when the congress was to begin.

Only on the morning of July 23, shortly before the congress began, the representatives of the "Unity and Progress" committee, together with their worthy officers who constituted their club in Debar, distributed them to the delegates and other participants in that congress. , the special program designed by them.²⁴ Four points of the Young Turk program, according to the Turkish historian of Albanian origin, Sulejman Kılççe, who relies on Ottoman archival sources, had the following content:

1. It was not possible to think of any circumstance which would impair the true desire to live and die as an Ottoman. We will show our strength to those who will violate this decision.

²¹Shpuza, Gazmend, Discussions and Decisions of the Congress of Dibra (1909), Albanological Research - Historical Sciences Series, 31-32,2001-2002, Prishtina, 2003, p. 213.

²²Shukri Rahimi The attitude of the Turkish government towards the issue of the Albanian Alphabet, Jehona, Skopje, 1965, p56

²³AIH, Vj-19-1-195, Congress of Dibra, Bitola, 2 August 1909, Posfai, see also Verli, Marenglen, cited work, ibid., P. 116.

²⁴Кодра, Масар, Конгресите во Дебар, Елбасан и Битола – на Албандкото Ослободително Движење, Гласник на ИНИ, Година XII, Скопје, 1969 год., Nr. 1-2, fq. 108.

2. We reject the opinion that the Constitution cannot live in the Ottomans; to sanctify the Kanun of the faith, which applies to Albanians, we also consider the Ottoman Constitution as our main national duty and to give it life.

3. In order to protect the rights of our constitutional government from the existing political events and those that will appear in the future, the Albanian military troops, after the call of the government and its instructions, will immediately go to war, endangering their lives. .

4. Against those who serve external motives and purposes and those who do not obey the laws of government, force will be used to implement the measures to be taken by our constitutional government and in a manner that is deemed reasonable by it.

The recruitment law will be accepted and implemented throughout Albania.²⁵

Unlike S. Kılçe, Professor Masar Kodra, relying on Serbian diplomatic sources, The four points of the program presented by the Young Turks are as follows:

1. To live and die like an Ottoman.

2. To the European views that the Islamic religion is not in accordance with the Constitution, we declare that this is not true because the core of the Islamic religion is defined by the Constitution.

3. Europe says that we (Albanians) demand autonomy. This is not true.

4. In Europe it is emphasized that we (Albanians) do not want to give soldiers. However, we have said that for the homeland we will give the last drop of blood when it is in danger.²⁶

Apparently, these points offered by M. Kodra, were the first proposals of the program, which after the intervention of the Albanian delegates, the same have undergone changes.

In any case, as could be understood from the content of these four points of the program and in support of what we discussed above, the Young Turks intended to approve²⁷ these four points proposed by them, written only in Turkish, and more after their approval to conclude and his work Congress. This acceptance, if carried out, supported and approved by the representatives in the congress, meant that they renounced their nationality and were considered Ottomans.

²⁵Süleyman Kılçe, *Arnavutluk in Ottoman History*, Izmir, 1944, p. 385, *Arnavutlukta Islahat (Reforms in Albania)*

²⁶Кодра, Масар..., *cite-d work*, Ibid, p. 108-109.

²⁷Unanimously.

But, these attempts met with opposition from the group of Albanian patriotic delegates, which was also expressed by their position through the unveiling of a program with national requirements, such as: the opening of Albanian schools throughout Albania, the proclamation of the Albanian language as a compulsory language in all existing schools, the appointment of Albanian officials in Albanian areas, etc.²⁸The newspaper of the time "Shqypeja e Shqypnisë", in one of its articles, among other things, wrote that the Albanians full of national ideas took the chair with fiery speeches, defended the nation and its self-separation from others, to learn its own language in national classrooms.

The Albanian delegates to the Congress were divided into two streams: one side was the current of representatives of the Young Turk Committee for Unity and Progress (Ittihad ve Terakki), while the other current consisted of the supporters of the Albanian Cultural and Political Movement.²⁹ The latter, who made up the vast majority of participants in Congress, had reservedly accepted the program proposed by the Young Turks. One of the first speakers to oppose the program was the Thessaloniki delegate, Abdyl Ypi.³⁰ But despite the aforementioned pressures, outside of Congress and the climate created in Congress, especially through the tone of the dictatorship of the participating military, Four points (of the Young Turk project), as he reported and the consul of Manastir, were considered insufficient and the Albanian delegate, of Thessaloniki, Abdyl Bej Ypi Starja, on behalf of the Albanian delegates, protested against this program imposed by the young Turks, giving a speech to "Ardent in support of the rights granted by the Constitution, against the oppression and reduction of liberty."³¹ In this situation, Hafiz Ali Korça took the floor, who as a sign of revolt, among other things, said that, since there was no need for talks on necessary issues of the people, then "we are gathered in vain; and the purpose, being only to prove these four nodes, they proved them since they were in the clubs and had not come here".³² Through these discussions, the real purpose was once again highlighted, with which the Young Turks demanded the organization of the Dibra Congress, for which Albanian representatives and intellectuals, whether participating in this congress or not, had cast a shadow of doubt and set in motion to prove the meaning or significance of their content.

At the insistence of the Albanian delegates, the above four points were translated into Albanian and the chairman H. Vehbi Dibra, allowed the discussion to take place in the Albanian language as well. Among other Albanian speakers, who influenced the congress to take a completely

²⁸Prifti, Kristaq, Dervish Hima, Tirana, 1987, p. 187.

²⁹Pirraaku, Muhamet, The political war between the two currents in the Congress of Dibra, the Congress of Dibra ..., *ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁰Ypi, Abdyl, Congress of Dibra and H. Ali Korça, Tirana, year 1918, p. 5.

³¹AIH, Vj-19-1-195 ..., here.

³²*Ibid.*

opposite direction not in line with the intentions of the Young Turks, along with Abdyl bej Ypi, Hafiz Ali Korça, Dervish Hima, Fehmi Zavalani should definitely be singled out, but also many others. After successive clashes, the two currents finally agreed to form a Commission of 40 members, who was tasked with drafting the political program of the Congress, where in addition to the four points proposed by the Young Turks, it would also include the points proposed by the Albanian delegates.

It is a fact that the Commission of 40 members is joined by five other people and specifically: the vali of Manastir, Sami bej Kulla, the general inspector and three dibrans. Haxhi Vehbi Dibra was elected as the first chairman of the Commission by a majority of votes, for the second chairman the mufti of Manastir, Hoxha Rexhep Voka, while the secretary Ihsan bej Thessaloniki.

The first meeting of the Commission was held on July 25, 1909 at the house of Zejnulla Hatib. The second meeting was held on July 26, chaired by the Mufti of Bitola, Rexhep Voka.³³ The third meeting of the Commission was characterized by clashes and disagreements between the delegates defending the Albanian and Young Turk ideas.³⁴ Following the meeting, a very tense atmosphere was created between the Albanian and pro-young Turkish delegates. It was the speech of Hafiz Ali Korça, who demanded that in the future Albanians should not be sent to remote areas of the Ottoman Empire, such as Yemen, Hijaz and others, as well as the release of all Albanian political prisoners; he also touched upon the problem of educating Albanian children in their mother tongue, where among other things he emphasized that: "... our neighbors in terms of education have reached the highest level, we unfortunately have remained as the people of Central Africa. With all that, in Albania and all languages are taught our language, why not learn ...".³⁵

In order for these problems to be solved as soon as possible, he undertook to add five more points to the program proposed by the Young Turks, which had to do with:

1. Teaching the Albanian language in all state schools;
2. Improving learning through
madrese (religious schools);

³³Aqif Pashë Elbasani (1860-1926), *Collection of documents, prepared by: Mentar Belegu, Hysen Kordha and Rudina Mita, Municipality of Elbasan, doc. no. 22, Excerpt from the book "Congress of Dibra and Hafiz Ali Korça", written by Abdyl Ypi, in which the attitude and point of view of Aqif Elbasani, towards a problem discussed during a session, Tirana, 2012, p. 59; see also: Ypi, Abdyl ..., cited work, ibid., p. 7.*

³⁴Shpuza, Gazmend, Discussions and decisions of the Congress of Dibra (1909), Albanological research ..., ibid., P. 199.

³⁵Ismail Ahmedi, Hafiz Ali Korça - Life and Works, Works I, Alsar, Tirana 2019, p. 47-48.

3. Not sending Albanian boys as soldiers to the fiery deserts of Yemen because two thirds of them never returned to their homeland;

4. Cleaning of swamps, construction of roads and bridges:

5 Release of 150 Albanian prisoners³⁶ as reactionaries.³⁷

The third meeting was accompanied by debates between representatives at the Dibra Congress. At the fourth meeting of the Commission, the proposal of Hafiz Ali Korça was approved without any votes against that military service should not be carried out only in the desert of Arabia, but be carried out according to a special regulation.³⁸ After the discussion and proposal regarding this issue, the delegate Hafiz Ali Korça took the floor again, who, after speaking at length about the rapid modernization of madrasas in Albania, among others, finally concluded that. "... madrasas have come to a mosque to mourn.

In less than twenty years, the madrese buildings will become owls' nurseries ...If the madrasas were not improved, since we Albanians are in the navel of Europe after half a century in Albania, there will be no one left who knows both words of owls. "So please take that into account."³⁹ So in the discussions conducted by him, in the personality of Hafiz Ali Korça, in addition to the genuine national position regarding the Albanian language and education and the rights of Albanians, including the performance of military service not far away, the good religion stood out,

who also respected the religious garb he wore. The fifth meeting began with a heated debate over whether to proceed with Congress or close it with the approval of the program summarized in the four points proposed by the Young Turks. At the end of the majority meeting it was decided that the decisions of the Congress be divided into two parts (nodes), with what the first five nodes were called "Primary joint nodes", while the other 12 points which were approved by Congress were called "necessary follow-up nodes".⁴⁰

In the same tense situation and in the spirit of threats, as it was presented in the fifth meeting, the sixth meeting was also quite loaded with problems. Myderrizi Mustafa Ohri at the beginning of the meeting presented a memorandum signed by 10 delegates, whereby it was declared that, if

³⁶My note: By reactionary, Hafis Ali Korça meant the political opponents of the Young Turk regime.

³⁷Korça, Hafiz Ali, *Work II, The Seven Dreams of Albania*, Alsar, 2019. p. 55

³⁸Shpuza, Gazmend, *Congress of Dibra on a historical level*, Dibër, 2005, p 201.

³⁹Ypi, Abdyl ..., cited work, *ibid.*, P. 13.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 17.

other matters outside the preliminary basic nodes were still being discussed, they would leave Congress.⁴¹ Then the report of Dr. was read. Ibrahim Temos written outside the hall, which was signed by about 30 companies whose content stated that Albanians had respected and implemented Ottoman legislation, but they could not remain silent when it came to violations of freedom and rights granted to them gave this legislation. The report further explicitly stated that: "Albanians are the defenders of the constitution, they are humbled by the Turkish government.

Given that from the event of March 31 onwards, there has not been a single movement, unfortunately, we are learning that some of the great Turkish politicians in revenge of the Albanians are feeding some dubious mentions. So we want a commission to be formed by freedom-loving Albanians and thus raise this suspicion ".⁴² A very wide debate took place on this report, but in the end it was not accepted by all the congress delegates.

In general, the objective set by the Young Turks that the Congress of Dibra be of a pro-Ottoman character and that decisions be taken to verify allegiance to the policy of the Young Turks, not only was not achieved, but rather from the confrontation of attitudes and views, the development of fierce debates, the electrified atmosphere and especially the decisions adopted, clearly showed the great differences that existed between the Albanian National Movement and the policy of the young Turks. The group of patriotic Albanian delegates made it clear to the delegates of the Congress that the Albanians could not give up the definitions and goals of their National Movement. Through this Congress, not only was the loyalty of the Albanians to the Young Turk policy not achieved, and therefore, The much-coveted "loyalty" to the Ottoman Empire,

but these relations marked further aggravation. The Albanian delegates, although for tactical reasons avoided open conflict with the Young Turks, this was done in the name of not giving them a reason to violently suppress the Albanian National Movement, and that they showed no sign of closeness when the objectives of this movement were called into question.

3. Decisions of the Congress of Dibra

The requests for the opening of Albanian schools, which were submitted by Hafiz Ali Korça and which were supported by other delegates, encountered strong support from the vast majority of Albanian delegates.⁴³ The demand for the teaching of the Albanian language and for the opening of schools in this language constituted a "great crime" and "unforgivable" for the Young Turks,

⁴¹Shpuza, Gazmend..., *cited work, ibid*, p. 202.

⁴²Ypi, Abdyl..., *ibid*, p. 17.

⁴³Sherif, Delvina,*Chronicles of the National Congress of Dibra, 23-29 July 1909*, Dibra, 2005., pp. 74-75

because they intended to overthrow all the claims of the Young Turks before the great powers that the Albanians do not have "any demands", but also for the fact that Albanians, for the first time after the proclamation of Constitutionalization "They were separating from Turkey." The representative of the Young Turk Committee, Captain Ejup Sabriu, He described the Dibra Congress as the cornerstone of "Self-government of Albania".

After fierce five-day debates, an agreement was finally reached for the program to be approved in two parts. The first part of the program presented by the Young Turks, had a total of five points, called "The first nodes for unification", at the request of the Albanian delegates, underwent some changes, while the second part of the twelve points, called "The second necessary nodes", were the requests of the Albanian delegates, which were formulated very carefully and in a moderate way. This compromise reached between the Young Turks and the Albanians surprised the anti-Albanian circles, respectively Serbian, Greek, Bulgarian and Russian. The Serbian consul from Bitola (Manastir) reported that at the Dibra Congress, Young Turk politics had suffered deep losses.⁴⁴

The decisions of the Dibra Congress were also commented by the Austrian consul in Shkodra, Kral, who wrote in his August 5 report that: "On the talks and decisions in Debar, where approximately 300 delegates from the five vilayets of Rumelia were present, the returned delegates are almost satisfied. It was immediately announced that there had been significant differences of opinion between Shkodra residents and Albanian delegates with nationalist sentiments from other parts of Albania. While the nationalists demanded compulsory education in the Albanian language and the establishment of Albanian schools throughout Albania, others declared and among themselves the Muhammadans of Shkodra that this request was unjust, therefore the proposal of those with nationalist sentiments did not find acceptance and so they should be satisfied with making a decision which left the use of the Albanian language in schools to the judgment of any locality".⁴⁵ The news about the Congress of Dibra and the decisions taken in it spread throughout the Albanian space. In a letter that Lef Nosi had received from Elbasan, it was announced that a very important meeting would be held in Diber e Madhe, in which representatives from many cities of Albania had participated, while Elbasan had been represented by Haxhi Aliu and Aqif Pasha Elbasani. The letter, among other things, stated that: "...The delegates who gathered in Debar, it was said in the letter, after many assemblies they made 13 points (made) necessary for our country and made in Debar a request in the capital is making in vain did they not stay in Debar to wait for an answer from Istanbul that (accepts) their

⁴⁴ДАРМ. 1. 17. 3. 25/355.

⁴⁵AIH, Vj. 19-1-196, Congress of Dibra, Shkodra, 5 August 1909, Kral.

requests or not? Then you will be called insured work .. ".The letter then described the requests of the Albanian delegates, which were as follows:

1. Not to send soldiers to Yemen only from Albania but also from other areas according to the percentage that belongs to them.
2. Albanian teachers to be paid by the government.
3. To build railways in Albania.
4. Without the order of the sultan, the army should not dare to attack with artillery any Albanian province like in Upper Albania.
5. We do not give the gjiritin (tax).
6. To be together with the young Turks for other times and days.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the newspaper "Lirija" of Thessaloniki, in issue 56, which appeared on 8 (22) August 1909, followed the press conference of the delegate, Abdyl bej Ypit, held two days ago at the headquarters of the Albanian Club "Union" in Thessaloniki, who called the decisions of the Congress of Dibra as a great victory for the Albanian nation, with the hope that they will soon be published and distributed throughout Albania. According to him, the biggest victory of that Congress was in point 3 of the "Second Node" of decisions, where Albanian delegates have requested the opening of Albanian schools. According to him: "... the greatest value of decisions is point 3 of the second part, where the congress seeks the source of all happiness, the source without which all fields and all flower gardens dry up and become desolate: this source that gives spirit and light is knowledge and learning.

The delegates all unanimously demand that today's schools be repaired, that schools be opened, that teaching be improved, and that teaching in the Albanian language be improved!... ”.⁴⁷

The young Turk's intention to impose the 4 points of their program on the Albanians, on the one hand it was not realized, which proved the solidarity of the Albanians, but on the other hand and in general also in the attitudes that the Young Turks held towards the peoples of European Turkey with their policy, did not succeed. But the Albanian patriots, according to the Austro-Hungarian consuls, did not manage to avoid the approval of 5 points that contained similar spirit, but insisted and managed to impose their appearance together with 12 other points:

⁴⁶Aqif Pashë Elbasani (1860-1926), *Compilation of documents ..., the cited work, ibid., Doc. No.23, p. 59-60.*

⁴⁷Dibra Congress, "Freedom", no. 56, Thessaloniki, 8 August 1909, p. 2.

1. Arbitrary enforcement itself is contrary to the principles of an organized state, in which the protection of person and property is secured, a movable and immovable property, should only be affected on the basis of a previous court decision. Against unjust appropriations, against robbery and theft, necessary measures must also be taken.

2. For military-strategic reasons as well as for the economic needs of the respective regions, it is required for the facilitation of the transport of goods, construction of railways, roads and bridges, canals, use of rivers for navigation, regulation of lakes and rivers as well as development of navigation.

3. The curriculum at religious high schools (madreseve) should be reformed in such a way that different rules from other science subjects are accepted and which should be developed diligently. The program should be precisely punctual and regular exams should be done. Students must have the proper school education beforehand. Where necessary, high schools will be opened, for trade, for mastery and normal, where the main importance in their curriculum will be occupied by religious philosophy, the peculiarities of Islam, based on the deep explanations of the Kur'an, subjects which will be by suitable teachers. The existing schools will be perfected and a University will be built in a suitable place in European Turkey. In the Albanian areas where the education of the people is more backward, elementary civic-professional-agricultural schools and colleges will be established without wasting time.

The use of the local language in lessons as well as the extent of this teaching is left to the respective country to practice. The costs of maintaining these schools will be borne by the government.

4. Complications should be avoided in military calls. Civil offices are required to make timely announcements of classes and the number of persons to be called.

5. The basic reforms that have been established in the capital (Istanbul), should be implemented in other vilayets as soon as possible.

For this, capable officials should be used in each country to know the conditions of the country well. The administrative committee of the vilayet must recognize in reality the disposition rights granted by the laws of the vilayet.

6. It is recommended to the government to take appropriate measures to avoid conflicts on the Montenegrin border.

7. Under existing legal provisions, it is required that troops assigned to the Hijaz, Yemen and other hot and remote areas be withdrawn from all armed forces (and not preferably from some parts of it).

8. In the sale of tithes (ashari) one should not act according to the approximate destination, or of a higher destination, which causes overdue fisk loans, but on the basis of a destination of true present value, by means of a commission composed of experts.

9. Having suffered unbearable losses in human and moral and material damage originating in the privileges of the Tobacco Control Society, and after the term of the concession is coming to an end, it is required to now replace it, in return for a reward, respectively, if this is not possible, to necessarily abandon an application of the concession.

10. In order to maintain the sincere (loyal) Ottoman attitude, the Orthodox Christians of Albanian and Vlach nationality must submit their schools from the Church to the Ministry of Education. For the use of their mother tongue, in religious services, within the framework of the concession granted by the Constitution law on freedom of religion, to appoint priests who speak the language in question. Representatives of Bulgarian bishops are then required to be allowed as permanent members of the Administrative Committee.

11. It would be desirable if, following the example of Thessaloniki, union commissions were formed in other countries as well, to educate a rapprochement and brotherhood between members of each nationality.

12. Considering the great usefulness of these meetings, like this one, it is decided that in October of each year, an assembly will be held that will last 15 days, in one of the localities of European Turkey, designated by lottery, in which each of the six vilayets has to send 20 delegates.

The meeting will be entitled "Albanian-Ottoman Congress for Unification and Constitution". The program of the Congress will be announced by the meeting place of the respective vilayet.⁴⁸

4. Echoes and attitudes for the Congress of Dibra, after its holding

The Congress of Dibra, as an important political event for the time, aroused special interest among diplomats, respectively the consuls of the Great Powers and neighboring countries. The

⁴⁸AIH, Vj-12-2-260, Shkodër no. 105 dated 5.VIII.1909 (translation from Turkish); see also: Central State Archive (CDA) Φ. 176K, 92-95, Decisions of the Congress of Dibra on July 10, 1909, Monastir, Printing House "Kombi" 1909 - 1325; see also: Decisions of the congress of Dibra, Lirija, Nr. 54, July 25, 1909, p. 3.; see also: Verli Marenglen ..., cited work, *ibid.*, Documents, Decisions of the Dibra Congress of July 1909 and other documents, pp.127-130.

Austro-Hungarian consuls, in their daily reports, emphasized that the Albanian patriots, although they did not manage to avoid the approval of the 5 points proposed by the Young Turks, but insisted and managed to impose their appearance together with 12 other points. Thus, the consul in Bitola (Manastir), Posfai, wrote in his August 2 report: "The Dibra Congress ended sooner than expected. Most of the delegates left with the conviction that the genuine intentions of this The congress was to reassure the Young Turks that the Albanians do not nurture any goals for independence and any hostile feelings towards the constitutional regime. In the Congress, a current against the prestige of the Young Turk committee emerged, especially from the delegates of Bitola, Ioannina, Luma, Gjakova, Prizren"⁴⁹. In the supplementary report of the same date, Posfai, highlighted the clashes between the Young Turks and the Albanian patriots, which had come to the fore from the first day, when the Young Turks had imposed a four-point program on the delegates. "... These four points," said Posfai, "were insufficient compared to the many wishes of the delegates." from the constitution, against the suppression of free discussion ... " The response given by an officer, the consul continued, that "if the delegates do not want to sign them then they should be forced to do so, risked causing a serious quarrel. The nationalists withdrew to talk at the tekke of Baba Shabani, the Young Turks in Beledije (Municipality). A three-member delegation of the latter finally agreed with the former that a commission of 40 members (eight for each of the five vilayets) should establish a broad program ... ".⁵⁰

Unlike the consul of Thessaloniki, the consul of Skopje says, according to which, The Congress of Dibra, was another attempt "for the rapprochement of the Young Turks towards the Albanians"

which had come as a result of the external situation which, as he claims "logically ranks with other actions of this kind, done even before, such as the withdrawal of the troops of Dervish Pasha, and the introduction of the Albanian language as a compulsory subject in the schools of ruzhdije and idadije. The Ghegs, for their part, continues the consul, unable to rise to their own strength from their low cultural status, they need a push from outside, and this time it came from the Young Turks. This circumstance related to the international situation, seems to have contributed to the invitations being implemented properly ... ".⁵¹ An assessment of the Dibra

⁴⁹AIH, Vj-19-10-1073, Congress of Dibra, Bitola, 2 August 1909, Report of the Austro-Hungarian consul in Bitola, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, on the completion of the proceedings of the Congress of Dibra.

⁵⁰AIH, Vj-19-1-195, Congress of Dibra, Bitola, 2 August 1909, Supplementary report of the Austro-Hungarian consul in Bitola, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, on the real intentions of holding the Congress of Dibra.

⁵¹AIH, Vj-12-2-242, Skopje, 8 August 1909, Confidentially, Report of the Austro-Hungarian Consul in Skopje, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, on his views on the Skopje delegates to the Dibra Congress, on the efforts of the Young Turks for a rapprochement with the Albanians, etc.

Congress also came from the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, who in his August 5 report, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna about the differences shown in the Congress between Shkodra residents and Albanian delegates with nationalist sentiments from parts other of Albania. "While the nationalists, wrote the consul, demanded compulsory education in the Albanian language and the establishment of Albanian schools throughout Albania, others declared and among themselves the Muhammadans of Shkodra that this request was unfair, therefore the proposal of those with nationalist feelings did not find acceptance and so they should be satisfied with making a decision which left the use of the Albanian language in schools and the subject of this lesson in the judgment of any locality ...".⁵²

According to the Russian consul in Bitola, the young Turks chose Dibra to achieve their goals: "Dibra and its environs - wrote the consul - was proclaimed as a hostile place of the Young Turks, as they had sworn to destroy the country's Young Turk committee."⁵³ The Albanian press attached great importance to this congress, which noted that the Young Turks convened the Dibra Congress in order to impose their full will on the Albanians. The newspaper "Shqipja e Shqypnis", on August 1, 1909, after initially emphasizing that the congress was a young Turkish act, concluded that the Albanian patriots changed its direction and "Filled with national ideas, we got the chair, and the support of patriotic orators who start speaking hot words, boasting of his nationality and attention from others, learning his language in national schools, without which no one can survive nation be on the face of the earth ...".⁵⁴

The same newspaper, in another article published on February 6, wrote that "for the misfortune of the Young Turks, that the scales weighed more heavily on the sides of the Albanians, who remind me of their country, not the world." The newspaper further, given the obstacles posed by the Young Turk government and the "Unity and Progress" committee in terms of educating Albanians in their mother tongue like all other nationalities of the Empire and especially in terms of the use of Latin letters, warned that Albanians did not would adhere to the current program of securing their national rights, in a constitutional way, but would also oppose "manly"⁵⁵

⁵²AIH, Vj-19-1-196, Congress of Dibra, Shkodra, 5 August 1909, Report of the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna, on the return of the delegates of the vilayet of Shkodra and their mood

⁵³Senkievich, Irena, "Osvoboditelno dvizhenje albanansko narod, 1905-1912", Moscow 1959 p. 191 (according to Mojsi Murra, The Press of the Time about the Congress of Dibra, 23 July 1909, The Congress of Dibra 1909-2004, Papers and Papers, Dibra, 2005, p. 171, which refers to Shukri Rrahimi, Jehona, Skopje 1967 no. 4.).

⁵⁴"Shqipja e Shqypnis", Nr. 6, Sofia, 1 August 1909.

⁵⁵Shpuza, Gazmend ..., quoted work, *ibid.*, P. 211.

The "Freedom" of Thessaloniki, on July 25 (August 7) 1909, published in full the decisions of the Congress of Dibra.⁵⁶ Two weeks later, respectively on August 8 (21), he considered the Dibra Congress as the first Albanian national gathering, or as it will be expressed: the first meeting where the whole of Albania has matured to choose a job necessary for the whole country. "... We do not want to make the long history of the congress, the newspaper emphasized; we hope the protocols will be printed and anyone can sing them. As a tree, without a doubt, the congress became a great gain for our country and our nation, because the decisions were really made according to our needs ...".⁵⁷ The same newspaper, on February 6 (19) 1910, talking about the intrigues of Serbian chauvinists in Albania, wrote, among other things: "... It suffices to read their assemblies at the congress they held for years in Skopje, and when one of their delegates to the Dibra Congress, which was an Albanian congress, dared to say that Kosovo is Old Serbia!"⁵⁸

Unlike the above two newspapers, the newspaper "Dielli", a body of the Pan-Albanian Federation "Vatra" published in the US, had a critical assessment of the Congress of Dibra. This newspaper, on August 27, 1909, wrote: "A more shameful toy than this Congress could not be played by the Young Turks on the backs of the Albanians. "The Congress was called Albanian just to lie to the world."⁵⁹ The same newspaper, in the next issue, published on September 3, 1909, wrote that what the Young Turks had failed to do "with weapons in Kosovo, they had tried to do with a wise congress."⁶⁰

Unlike "Dielli", the newspaper "Orthodox League", which was published in Korça by MihalGrameno, which is much more restrained and correct. This newspaper in the article titled "Who convened the Congress of Dibra", published on August 17, 1909, wrote, among other things: "... The defendant Congress of Dibra, which was never believed to have a national purpose, all that Congress would shut up our enemies, who for some time have wanted to call us unconstitutional ... again that congress decided that the Albanian language should be forced to be taught in Albania in all the schools of the kingdom together with Turkish with letters that anyone wants. This decision, although it was against the Congress of Manastir, is still a good sign to end the intrigues that Albanians do not want their language ...".⁶¹

⁵⁶"Lirija", No. 54, Thessaloniki, 25 July (5 August) 1909, Decisions of the Congress of Dibra, p. 3.

⁵⁷"Freedom", no. 56, Thessaloniki, 8 (21) August 1909, p. 2, Dibra Congress. Fq.2.

⁵⁸"Freedom", no. 74, Thessaloniki, 6 (19) February 1910, *The Intrigues of the Serbs in Albania*.

⁵⁹"Dielli", Nr. 22, Boston, August 27, 1909.

⁶⁰"Dielli", Nr. 23, Boston, September 3, 1909.

⁶¹"Orthodox League", no. 3, Korça, 17 August 1909.

The newspaper "La nazionalealbanese", as he points out in one of his works, the Albanian scholar, MojsiMurra, in one of its issues during the month of August 1909, conveyed the memories of a participant in the Congress: "... that the entrance of delegates in Debar was triumphant ...The hospitality was really princely, really oriental ... We did not think of finding such hospitality in Debar, well furnished rooms, in a completely European way".⁶² The two Albanian intellectuals from Dibra, participants in that congress, HakiStërmilli and Ismail Strazimiri, also talk about the historical significance of the Dibra Congress, which was discussed above. LumoSkendo also speaks, who paid extraordinary attention to this Congress in the newspaper "Lirija" of Thessaloniki, which was run by him. Thus in issue 52 of the newspaper, dated July 11, 1909, he writes: "Our correspondent Mr. HamdiMetja writes to us that in Dibra many preparations were made to receive those who have been invited for the day of July 24; 35 houses have been cooked for the stay of foreigners. Delegates have been invited from every city in Albania."⁶³

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⁶²Murra, Mojsi, The Press of the Time about the Congress of Dibra, 23 July 1909, the Congress of Dibra ..., the work cited, *ibid.*, P.172.

⁶³"Lirija", Nr. 52, Selanik, 11 korrik 1909, f. 3.

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