

## **Elbasan, the political life during the period November 1912- March 1914**

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The idea of independence of Albania had found support from all regions with great enthusiasm. Over 2000 insurgents, triumphantly entered the city of Elbasan and liberated it from Turkish forces. On 25 November 1912, Elbasan was the first city that declared independence, preceding the declaration of national independence. For this political act was notice by telegram and Ismail Qemali. On this day was also signed content of the act of declaration of independence for Elbasan, where written:

“All our people, Muslim and Christian, with a voice acknowledged the independence of Albania. On behalf of all the people of the prefecture of Elbasan”<sup>1</sup>

In the letter addressed to Ismail Qemali for the act of raising the flag and the proclamation of independence of Elbasan, among the members of the signing of this act were:

Aqif Biçakçiu, Abdulla bej Tirana, Ali Agjahu, Refik Myftiu, Sheh Hysen Sulova, Sheh Mahmut Guma, Ruzhdi Alushi, Alush Saraçi, Veniamin Deliana, Veniamin Nosi, Kol Papajani, Emin Haxhihademi, Ymer Peni, Hysen Dakli, Hysen Hostopalli, Serafin Jorgaqi, Rrapush Demeti, Hasan bej Biçakçiu, Fuat bej Kahremani, Servet bej Zylfi, Taqi Buda etj.<sup>2</sup>

In Gramsh, the national flag was raised by Kamber Dyrmyshi about dates 26 to 28 November 1912.<sup>3</sup> Emin Matraxhiu then took over to prepare the national flag and stamped with small dimensions.<sup>4</sup> The declaration of independence

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<sup>1</sup> Kita, P, Elbasani në luftë për çlirim, Tiranë 1971, fq. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Përlindja e Shqipërisë : “Mbi kremtimin e festës kombëtare në Elbasan”, Vlorë 7 dhjetor 1913

<sup>3</sup> AME, Fondi 3, Dosja 1, fq 8

<sup>4</sup> A.M.E, Fondi. 28, Dosja. 10, “Flamuri kombëtar”, Elbasan: 1913, fq 3

ended with the raising of the flag on November 25, 1912 in Elbasan was taken in very difficult circumstances when the Serbian Army was progressing rapidly approaching the region of Elbasan. This act was undertaken in order that the Serbian authorities to become well-known fact of the declaration of independence of Albania. This event will be followed later on 27 November with the proclamation of independence in the city of Peqin the other regions of Albania. Such an enthusiasm expressed through telegrams at the time. In one of the letters of that period, which sent Ismail Qemali, was written :

“Let it be known, that evening at 6 at night, with the desire of all people, the city of Peqin, proclaimed the independence”.<sup>5</sup>

The people of the city of Peqin, and the villages around this city, known for the traditions and feelings of freedom and national independence, which gave a significant contribution patriotic as Adem Gjinishi, Bajram Kruja, Ramazan Teqja, Ibrahim Magani, Ramazan Cani, Ismail Haki Peqini etc. Delegates from the region of Elbasan, who attended the national meeting in Vlorë were: Shefqet Daiu, Lef Nosi, Qemal Karaosmani, Mithat Frasheri, Dervish Biçakçiu, Mahmut Kaziu, Asllan Shahini, Xhile Liçi.<sup>6</sup> On November 29, 1912, the Assembly of Vlorë, decided to create an advisory institution to the government, which was composed of 18 personalities of the Albanian nation. Members of advisory institution selected as a representative of the region of Elbasan were Shefqet Daiu, Dervish Biçakçiu.

Province of Gramsh, unreservedly supported the government of Vlorë in the war against the invaders. Declaration of independence of Albania in Vlorë on November 28, 1912, Ismail Qemali together with his government, communicated to all cities of the country that were not yet occupied by neighboring countries. The government elected by the Assembly of Vlorë had in its composition and from the region of Elbasan patriots: Lef Nosi - Minister of Post Telegraph, Shefqet Daiu - Second Secretary of the Assembly of Vlorë, Ahmet Dakli - Advisor to the Ministry of Finance. The mayor of the city, at that period, Mr. Alush Saraçi, in cooperation with Aqif Biçakçiu, kept regular correspondence with Ismail

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<sup>5</sup> Nosi, Lef, *Dokumente Historike 1812-1918*, Tiranë 2007, fq 88.

<sup>6</sup> AME, F. 3, D. 1, Elbasan: 26 nëntor 1982, fq 8.

Qemali. Ismail Qemali congratulated all the people of the region of Elbasan to the declaration of Independence and advised the patriots of this region to maintain peace and order. The city threatened by the Serbian occupation, it urged the authorities of this city to notify Ismail Qemali, who on behalf of the Interim Government immediately wrote to the Serbian General Metoviç:

“We have information, military forces commanded by you are set to march and conquer Elbasan... in principle, -he wrote,- is not fair to attack the Albanian lands... it means to possess an independent country, which is not at war with Serbia... therefore protest against this action, and pray that you withdraw your armies...”<sup>7</sup>

Ismail Qemali instructed the Municipality of Elbasan, about how to act with Serbian forces, which threatened invasion of the region of Elbasan. Authorities in the region of Elbasan, Ismail Qemali ordered “to respond to the ultimatum to Serb command for submission of the city, it was not entitled to the Serbian government's continued hostility against Albania that was not provoked hostility to Serbia.”<sup>8</sup> In correspondence of the time between the Prefecture of Elbasan and Dervish Bicakciut reflected a difficult situation where the people of Elbasan and Peqin was worried and panicked by the bad news coming from everywhere. Dervish Beu, except that the requested assistance prefecture also called Aqif Biçakçiu, Shefqet Beu, Emin Haxhiademi, Hysen Hostopalli, Alush Saraçi - the mayor of Elbasan to have patience.<sup>9</sup> Aqif Biçakçiu in a correspondence with Shefqet Verlacin wrote:

“Our situation is difficult, our people do not have guns ... Panic prevails here. God help us”.<sup>10</sup>

Interim government called on the country's cities to wait Serbian armies as friends, as their rights could be resolved only between the two respective governments. Despite this, the Serb forces captured the Elbasan on 29 November 1912, with the promise that came amicably and temporarily, but their commitment they will not hold. National flag removed from official buildings, and

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<sup>7</sup> AME, F 3, D 1, v 1912, fq 2

<sup>8</sup> Histori e Shqipërisë, vëllimi i II, Tiranë: Mihal Duri, 1965, fq 360

<sup>9</sup> Nosi, Lef, Dokumente Historike 1912-1918, Tiranë: 2007, fq 55.

<sup>10</sup> Nosi, Lef, Dokumente Historike 1912-1918, Tiranë: 2007, fq 56

Serb forces began to encourage hatred and conflicts between Orthodox and Muslim citizens in the city of Elbasan. After independence, during 1912-1913, this region has become an uphill struggle and continued not only to Ottoman forces continue to stay there, but especially to the army and Serb forces. Serbs during the month of December 1912 extended their rule in other provinces in the region of Elbasan. Many patriots in various areas of the region fought against Serbian invaders in Dumre, Gryksh, Pazhok, Shalsi, Gjyrale etc. Some guerrilla group operating in this region during the period December 1912 – 1913, attack on Serbian troops, causing great damage, forcing the military to leave the area. A major contribution to the fight against the invaders, have given the province of Belsh fighters, who caused more damage to Serbian forces in Pazhok. Ramazan Cani and about 30-40 fighters under the leadership of Adem Gjinishi that occasionally confront Serbian and Turkish forces in the area of Peqin. Serb military forces took some action in response, such as arrests, murder, burning houses etc. One of the biggest massacres in the region of Elbasan, was what occurred in the village Xherije, where about 35 boys were killed by bayonet by Serbian soldiers. Villages in the region of Elbasan, were forced to placed on alert by the confrontation with Serb troops. In December 1912, the village Shtermen, in the battle between Serbs and Albanians were killed 16 Serbian soldiers. In this battle were killed courier who maintain contacts with the government of Vlora, he called Abdyl Haxhimusai.<sup>11</sup>

By Serbian soldiers was exerted violence against American missionaries who were in Elbasan. The representative of the American mission, Mr. Erikson, is trying to build an American college in the city of Elbasan. On the initiative of American missionaries, Lef Nosi assumed that by a telegram to announce the Ismail Qemali. He failed to notify Ismail Qemali because Serbs arrested and imprisoned him.<sup>12</sup>

At this time, patriots of this city tried to open the high school “Normal” and the development of national education. In February 1912, high school reopened in the house of Qemal Karaosmanit. This school had three classes, about 80

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<sup>11</sup> Elbasani Enciklopedi, Elbasan: Sejko 2003, fq 362

<sup>12</sup> Panteon drejt Panteonit 2000, Elbasani-Enciklopedi, vëll. 1 Elbasan: Silver 2000, fq 136

students, with a staff of 4 persons. The lessons continued until the end of the school year with director Alexander Xhuvani.<sup>13</sup> Albania at this time was in a very difficult situation economically and politically. Elbasan also found in a difficult economic and political, due to the existence of feudal system inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Economic and political power beys and landowners, was very large in the region of Elbasan. Provisional Government, with residence in the city of Vlora was still powerless to solve economic, social and political problems, in different regions of the state of Albania. However, many personalities from the region of Elbasan unreservedly supported the government of Vlora.

Southern Albania was in a difficult situation, where the Greek forces had occupied a considerable part of this territory.

Aqif Biçakçiu led efforts for the spread of Albanian schools in Elbasan and across the country. Elbasan Prefecture in January 1913 received a telegram signed by Ismail Qemali and Interior Minister where Aqif Biçakçiu nominated as prefect of the prefecture of Elbasan. Appointment of Aqif Pasha had about his reputation in the region of Elbasan.<sup>14</sup> As a supporter of the government of Vlora, with its setting in the post of mayor of Elbasan from Ismail Qemali, Aqif Pasha undertook numerous measures in administration, education, opening of Albanian schools by him "doubled the salary of teachers in religious schools only to taught in Albanian schools of Elbasan".<sup>15</sup> Metropolitan of Durres, complained about the actions undertaken by Aqif Pasha. As against the response to the actions undertaken by Aqif Pasha, the representative of the Orthodox Church ordered the parents that their children not to send in Albanian schools. The people revolted and sent a protest note to the administration of education, signed by 40 patriots and Aleksander Xhuvani. Protesters had faith that "Albanian schools will continue teaching, will progress and no foreign language will not let them take the place of our language."<sup>16</sup> Prefect of the Prefecture (Aqif Biçakçiu) of Elbasan could avoid massacres and killings that Serb chauvinists led by Colonel Haxhiç tried to conspire immediately after the declaration of independence in Elbasan. In

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<sup>13</sup> Normalja në fokus të bashkohësisë, Elbasan, Silver 1999, fq 183.

<sup>14</sup> AQSH, Fondi 271-471, D. 5, fq 6.

<sup>15</sup> AME, F. 1, D. 4, viti 1913, fq 3

<sup>16</sup> Elbasani Enciklopedi, Elbasan : Sejko 2003, fq 117.

1913 years, he gave a great contribution to the fields of law, as the organization of criminal law, civil law and the creation of the notary, in trade relations in Elbasan etc. Interim government of Vlora, failed to extend its authority throughout Albania, its sphere of influence included cities such as Lushnja, Fier, Berat, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Tepelena and Elbasan. In other parts of Albania were set up some local governments that were under the authority of the immortals of the land, who were among the wealthiest and most that had enough support in those countries. Durresi governed by Esat Toptani, Lezha governed by Ded Coku, Oroshi governed by Preng Bibe Doda, Fieri governed by Ymer Pasha. Elbasan Prefecture did attempt that this region was under the influence of the government of Vlora. Governments established in different areas of Albania maintain their positions and there was a grudge between them. Their goal was the expansion of power and their rule, further enriching and securing a significant position in the new state. These local governments in their areas of influence had secured a social and political tranquility. Government of Vlora in its area of influence, including Elbasan, "got its hands on the documentation archives of the Ottoman administration did not make changes to existing laws and regulations of the Turkish regime". After April of 1913 with the departure of Serbian troops from the city, there was a kind of two-government, that of the government of Vlora and the Ottoman military power. Government of Vlora encountered numerous problems as: establishment of peace and order, the opening of Albanian schools, economic development of regions of the country etc. The Albanian people continue to pay more taxes imposed from the Turkish regime.

"People realized his job, paying taxes until the last currency, keeping peace and order... while also making sacrifices."<sup>17</sup> - wrote, Eqerem bey Vlora.

Many Patriots, under the call of the interim government, made an effort in September 1913 to re-open high school in Elbasan.

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<sup>17</sup> Vlora, Eqerem bej, Kujtime 1912-1925, vëll II, Tiranë: 2001, fq.8

They also contributed to the teaching of Albanian for the prefecture of the city administration, that the Albanian language to become mandatory.

The declaration of independence placed the country on the path of development in the economic, social, political and cultural. Old Ottoman administrative organization took over. During 1912-1913, the city of Elbasan and its regions distinguished as among the most peaceful in the whole country, with local government, schools that function regularly.<sup>18</sup> Government of Vlora had its total dependence on 7 prefectures which were divided into sub prefecture and the latter in the municipalities, while towns and villages, as appropriate canon of civil administration in Albania, which was announced by the government of Vlora on 22 November 1913, divided into one or more counties villages. A large majority of the population live in mountainous or hilly areas of the country. Prefecture of Elbasan, was one of the largest administrative unit was established in December 1912 and retains the same prefecture last territories XX century. This prefecture in 1913 had some level executives such as finance, education, agriculture, public affairs, the chief secretary of the prefecture and the gendarmerie commander.<sup>19</sup> Gendarmerie created in June 1913 consisted of 3 battalions, Vlora, Berat and Elbasan under the leadership of Ismail Haki Tatzatit.<sup>20</sup> An important part of government reforms in Vlora was the drafting and approval of the canon of the jury, to determine the functioning of the courts. This system was used only in a matter of Elbasan not provide the expected outcome, since people were not prepared for such a system. Prefecture of Elbasan, in 1913, had under its administration under the prefectures of Librazhd, Gramsh and Peqin. Until March 5, 1912, post office has been working in the framework of the postal network of the Turkish Empire. After independence, the first minister of Posts and Telegraph of the Albanian Government first appointed Lef Nosi patriot who contributed to the organization of the postal administration of the state. In the Region of Elbasan operated post offices in Peqin, Qukës and Mollas. In 1912-1913 director of the telegraph post office in Elbasan was Mr. Peter Dodbiba and the relationship with the government of Vlora made through telegraphic

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<sup>18</sup> Gazeta, Liri e Shqipërisë, "Letër nga Elbasani", Sofje , 24 dhjetor 1913.

<sup>19</sup> Gazeta, Përlindja e Shqipëries, 22 nëntor-13 dhjetor, viti 1913

<sup>20</sup> Dervishi, Kastriot, Historia e Shtetit Shqiptar, viti 1912-2005, Tiranë: 2006, fq 30

communication.<sup>21</sup> Telegraph office in the city of Elbasan, has had a major role in transmitting news and more urgent telegrams to all the cities of the country, especially with Vlora. Among the prefecture of Elbasan and the Minister of Justice, Mr. Petro Poga, there was exchange of letters on the appointment of judges in this city. Josif Haxhimima gave a major contribution to the legal administration of the city. There were telegrams between Ismail Qemalit and the prefecture for the appointment of Muslim religious personnel in this area.

Albanian language learning was one of the primary duties of the government of Vlora in 1912. A contribution to the development of education and learning Albanian language, have provided the following personalities: Josif Haxhimima, Sali Ceka, Simon Shuteriqin, Jovan Dimitreskun, Ahmet Gashin, Mustafa Currin, Ibrahim Shegunin etc. In 1912-1913, Emin Matraxhiut had taken over from Vlora to open government and the Albanian language for the Albanian administration officials. Part of the emancipated society was also interested to increase the role of women in society. During this period, created the first musical formations in this area, where musicians have contributed as Thanas Floqi, also Jovan Dimitresku was the first person who introduced the game of soccer in the city of Elbasan in 1913. Dimitresku formed the first soccer team, comprised of teachers that trained twice a week.<sup>22</sup>

Region of Elbasan gave valuable contribution for the benefit of the Albanian nation to further development of national consciousness, for the unification of all Albanian territories in the joint struggle against foreign invaders. Period of years 1912-1914, is one of the most important periods in the history of Albania, which testifies to the efforts of the Albanian state to emerge from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and the role and contribution that gave the city of Elbasan dignitaries at the service and support of this state and its further consolidation.

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<sup>21</sup> Elbasani-Enciklopedi, Elbasan: Sejko 2003, fq 134

<sup>22</sup> Në Panteon drejt Panteonit 2000, Elbasani-Eniklopedi, vëll I, Elbasan: 2002, fq 206.



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