

## Italian Politics and Albanian National Movement in the end of XIX<sup>th</sup> and the Beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup>

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**Abstract** The end of the XIX<sup>th</sup> and the beginnings of the XX<sup>th</sup> present an important period for the Albanian folk. During this period increased the efforts to be acquainted nationally. Due the sublimation of the Albanian national conscience, will be considered the lightening of the minds, which it will be possible only through the national education. An important part, in this process had the Arberesh of Italy. This thesis is going to treat their contribute in favor if the national question. The Arberesh area had the same behavior in the formation's political attitude of the Italian government toward Albania and the Albanian's question in total. A special merit to the inauguration of active politics toward east Adriatic, e especially toward Albania and the Albanian it had, no doubt, the Italian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi, originally Arberesh. His politic vision looked over the Italian government interests, to increase the influence of the peninsula of Balkan e especially in Albania, although inside this frame, he gave his contribute stimulating the efforts of his coexistent to the freedom and the social progress. The project of Italy inaugurated by Crispi aimed to have a main position in Otranto Channel, possibility to allow it to penetrate in Balkan to expand the influence area into Adriatic and Jon. This essay discusses over the problematic over mentioned giving us a clearer panorama over Albania of the National Renaissance period, the challenges it affronted, which, without doubt, it was possible to be resolved with the valuable contribute of the Albanians of Diaspora.

**Keywords** : Arberesh, National conscience, Renaissance, F. Crispi.

### 1. Italian Politics and National Movement in the Beginning of Xx-th Century

The Arberesh of Italy have contributed to the development of a broad activity in support of the Albanian issue. The Italian - Albanian activity was a strong incentive for the Albanian national movement. Their assistance is seen in "persistent propaganda to the press, with motions in parliament, with rallies and conferences". The aim of the Italian - Albanian activity was national consciousness in Albania and there caring about spreading their political program; also they doubled the efforts to attract the public opinion of Italians. Lorecchio had openly claimed that two fundamental principles led the political efforts of the Italian - Albanians. The first was "Albania for the Albanians", which coincides with Italian politics and the other "The Adriatic sea was an Italian and Albanian sea", the latter not affirmed from the Italians wishing the Adriatic sea to be only Italian. The beginning of the twentieth century marks an increase of the national activity of the Italian - Albanians. The Literary - Cultural movement of Italian - Albanian patriots at the same time and the politic movement were assisting in resolving the national cause.

In these movements, part of the contribution comes from Italian -Albanian colonies in regions such as Sicily, Calabria, Naples, etc. These colonies manifested a greater sensitivity about the fate of their homeland. Concerned about the future of the country and active participants in the movement to ensure the independence or autonomy of Albania were Italian - Albanian literary figures such as Girolamo De Rada, Vincenzo Darsa, Giuseppe Schirò, along with them and Francesco Crispi.

The Arberesh conducted a wide campaign of solidarity with the national movement. At 1, 2 and 3 October 1895 was opened the first Albanian congress in Corigliano Calabro. This congress was undertaken at the initiative of the figures as De Rada, Schirò and Anselmo Lorecchio. Congress was led by Francesco Crispi, being considered as "Albanian by blood and heart." It was dealt with the issue of

creating a common alphabet, but also a discussion about the internal situation in Albania and the country's future was held. In the foreground emerges the idea of a unified alphabet that will further strengthen the relationships between Albanian and Italian – Albanians, that would bring an increased cooperation in favor of resolving the national issue. The desire of the Albanians and the Italian - Albanians for a unified alphabet could be felt a lot, of course that would unite them more with each other. In the revealed proclamation, the need of unity was felt and cooperation between them was appealed, based on the fact that they had the same blood, speaking the same language and had the same traditions and aspirations in life. Besides discussion of a unified alphabet, the outcome of this congress was the creation of a National Forum too.

National Albanian Société was created, in San Demetrio Corone that, among its objectives, along rapprochement between different colonies of Italy, also aimed also aimed at launching large-scale relations with the Motherland. On 20 – 21 February 1897 was held in Lungro Lungro's Congress. Lungro's Congress was continuing Calabria's Congress. The congress reaffirmed the objectives set by the first Congress and reviewed the status of National Albanian Société. One of the main goals was realization of a collaboration between the two Albanian Adriatic coast. To achieve this unity, first of all a unified alphabet was needed. This fact is confirmed by proclamation issued by Anselmo Lorecchio on November 5, 1895 on behalf of the National Albanian Société, which read: "In Italy, there are 200000 Albanians spread all over fertile lands of Sicily, our colonies are living here since 4 centuries ago being quiet. We speak the same language as our brothers across the Adriatic, a language spoken by spoken by divine Pelasgians ... Known to the memory of our greatness ... it is imperative that we deal with one – another through writing". Besides the issue of the alphabet, another discussed problem is the national issue. All Italian - Albanians had as an ultimate objective the liberation of Albania, but to realize this there were different opinions. In 1900 there has been a combination of currents of thought. A moderated thinking, embraced by Lorecchio, whose aim was to increase the sense of Albanian nationality, although continued to remain under the Ottoman Empire. Another way of thinking was the realization of a revolution through which the independence of the Motherland would be achieved. Giuseppe Schirò supported the idea of revolution as the only escape route to independence. For Schirò uprising against the Ottomans was the only way to achieve the liberation of Albania. De Rada was against partial insurgency. He most feared the hostile goals of their Greek and Serb neighbors. Besides these two positions of Mr. De Rada and Schirò, there appears the attitude of a prominent figure of the time Ismail Qemali.

In 1900, Ismail Qemali issued a political program for the National Movement. In this program he presented his idea of consolidation of Albanian nationality, affirmation of Albanians as a separate nation and the recognition of national identity in the international arena.

Ismail Qemali said in press releases that he didn't support the secession of Albania from the Ottoman Empire, linking this with the fact that Albania detached from the Ottoman Empire could not face the risks from the neighbors. "As for Albanians, - stated in an interview he gave in Rome in 1900,-every revolutionary movement will bring nothing but would make legitimate foreign intervention." Ismail Qemali attitude to autonomy, stability, Balkan's balance found no support and very quickly a national movement took off. Regarding the attitude held from arbëresh colonies in Italy should be noted that their role in defense of the war of their same blood brethren was huge.

The Italian government had a positive effect in solving the Albanian issue and helped Italian - Albanians in their cultural - political movement in favor of the national cause of their brethren in Albania. Italy held such a position as a collaboration between the two sides Arbëresh of Italy and the Albanians on the other side of the Adriatic would favor Italian politics to strengthen its influence in the Adriatic. Italy required not only increasing influence in the Adriatic. It would also favor its interests to prevent Slavic infiltration but also interested in creating problems to Turkey.

In Italy, the issue of protecting the autonomy of Albania established many Albanian political committees. One of this committee was founded in Naples under the chairmanship of the Marquis D'Auletta. Organ of the committee was "Nuova Albania" (New Albania). The committee asked the Italian government to take into account the common interests of the Albanians or the Italians and to intervene to gain autonomy as required by the Albanians. The newspaper "La Nazione Albanese" declares an appeal to Arbëresh patriots everywhere to union in order to help their brethren across the Adriatic.

This appeal was made by the Albanian Committee of Milan.

A patriotic call to the Italo-Albanians:

"Compatriots"-

*"The goals against the integrity of Albania injustice to her by means of most varied, appears to succeed in affecting the integrity of Albania"*

*Let us remind that Albania expects too much from her children in Italy, so let us join our forces to make our protests heard through committees and telegrams in order to avoid allowing other injustices.*

*Albanian Committee of Milan*

*Ing.P. Sabatini.*

In 1900 rioting in Albania deepened, so it was seen as necessary to send Italian volunteers to support them. The press of early 1900s talked about sending Italian volunteers in Albania under the leadership of Garibaldi who seems to seek to continue the project of a Balkan expedition that his father failed to realize. The project took off in 1904, the year in which Garibaldi invited the most important figures of the colonies at a meeting in Rome on March 24, 1904, which formed an Albanian Council of Italy. Final objective of this congress was to provide freedom and independence of the motherland. The main purpose of the council was to unify Albanians of Italy with those of Albania and to support the Italian politics in Albania and the Balkans. In addition to approval, there were objections and at the same time doubts about this move. Regarding the Italian government's reaction it was inconsistent, at first supportive and stumbling after.

That was one of the reasons that R. Garibaldi's expedition was not implemented. Data obtained from the press of time and different sources show that the Italian-Albanian movement in favor of the Albanian issue was supported by prominent figures of the Italian and Albanian political life.

L. Von. Chlumecky, an expert on foreign politics of Austria - Hungary writes that Italian-Albanians found little support from the Italians.

However this did not prevent the continued efforts to provide the Italian public opinion, and to set up national consciousness. Albanian National Movement found Italian - Albanian support despite obstacles, this further encouraging the move.

Italo-Albanians activity strengthened the national movement and simultaneously made famous the Albanian issue internationally.

## **2. Inauguration of Balkan Politics of Italy and Albanians**

Albania's important position in the Western Balkans, the Adriatic Sea and the Otranto channel, had long attracted the attention of European powers.

One of the powers concerned to Albania was Italy, the interest that was showed for a long time since its union. Albania increasingly was returning to the core of Italian politics. Italian ruling wanted the Adriatic Sea to become Italian. The time of the great Garibaldi seems it's over and his promises of a Balkan expedition in aid of the Balkan peoples disappeared. Events in the Balkans and Italy's need to regain some of the areas they had lost in the Gulf of Venice and all that had been in the "mare nostrum", forced Italy to formulate a policy against Albania. Francesco Crispi was initiator of this policy. He has made a major contribution in increasing the prestige of Italy and Italian projects. Francesco Crispi was a pioneer of Italian politics in the Balkans, Crispi was the most popular of Italy's late nineteenth century. Abroad compared with Bismarck and Meternikun. He was born in Ribera of Sicily in 1819 and lived a long time in the village Palazzo Adriano (Sicily). Crispi comes from a large Albanian family. It is proven by documents and preserved Albanian traditions that his family originated from Albania. His family emigrated to Italy after the death of Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg.

In 1467 he was in Sicily and in 1482 was finally placed together with other families in Palazzo Adriano Albanian province of Palermo. His work made it one of the strongest and the largest of free and united Italy. His contribution is estimated today in the ranks of the colossus of Italy. He first attended the Italian - Albanian college in the city of Palermo and in 1841 was written in the Book of the courts of Naples. Crispi worked as an attorney but was an active participant in the revolutionary movement directed against Burbons.

Crispi was the instigator, supporter of the Sicilian expedition and the fundamental forces in the government of Garibaldi. In 1860 Crispi was elected deputy of the Italian parliament.

Following the 1877 Crispi was elected president of the Italian parliament. In February 1891 he regained the Prime Minister from 1891 to 1893. Crispi led for 8 years the Italian government. He conducted a foreign policy in favor of Italy and France. This led Crispi return to Italian lands inhabited by Italians in France. This policy followed by Crispi was making Italy a great European power. Crispi foreign policy

favoured increasing the prestige of Italy. The crisis that affected East and the Balkans was expanding day by day. The crisis also affected eastern Albania, which in these years became victims of policies of major powers. But what held Francesco Crispi attitude towards Albania in this period? Crispi attitude was contradictory concerning Albania and has been much discussion about self-image and his role to Albania. In the years 1875 - 1878 it was evident that the Ottoman Empire was not in its glorious days. This fell the prestige of the Ottoman Empire policies pave the way both the Adriatic powers Austro - Hungary and Italy. Events in the Balkans had the opportunity to Austria- Hungary to expand in the Balkans and to return once a good master of the Adriatic and Mediterranean partially.

This policy of Austria - Hungary in the Balkans affected the economic interests of Italy. This is the first reason that made Crispi think to take a policy towards Albania. Second, the tendency to turn Italy into a great power and to ensure that areas lost in the Bay of Venice and that he had been in "mare nostrum" Crispi did launch a policy towards Albania.

Crispi saw the Albanian issue as a way to strengthen Italy in the Adriatic to prevent and fight Austria. This fact is confirmed by Crispi statement in Italian Parliament in March 1880. It states: "In the Treaty of Berlin, Austria took the land forming the border in Bosnia and Herzegovina inviolable versus East and that must be satisfied. We, without being coveted these properties taken unfairly, should seek them to stay there, and not require more than the Treaty gives to them. In accordance with our interests and the principles of our great revolution, we should be protectors and friends of the small states in the Balkans". Crispi policy to allow autonomy of Albania within the Ottoman Empire did not bring the appropriate conditions for Albania to be developed.

Decisions of the Congress of Berlin violated Crispi project in Albania, the Austria – Italian rivalry was added, and there were no favors to Albanian people.

Crispi held for administrative autonomy to Albania because this policy was in favor of its project to provide influence in the Adriatic and hit the Austrian Kingdom. Crispi wrote in a newspaper "L'ora di Palermo" the article "Berlin Holidays" on May 5, 1900. He writes: "Albania has all the elements to be autonomous state, better than may have other Balkan countries, Europe will carry out an act of civilization if allowed autonomy. Intimate connections to cultivate a friendship for more than five centuries, making it more close to us (Italy) than the Austrian Empire".

Decisions of the Congress of Berlin gave priority to Austria and its policy in the Balkans and prevent Crispi's projects. However Crispi did not stop in the project for political rule in Albania. Propaganda in favor of his plan was realized quite well in his newspaper "La Riforma". Pursuing a "friendship" with Albania would bring a close approach with Albania so gradually Crispi dream of a complete union with it may come true. This policy followed by Crispi would become closer these two countries and hit the Austrian targets. Crispi writes in "L'ora di Palermo": "To give Albania to Austria nowadays, there would be no advantages to this kingdom and would be at the expense of Italy, so will eliminate any traces of influence in the Adriatic". With respect to the Crispi figure and his policy in Albania has taken different views somewhat contradictory. Albanian Renaissance back to Crispi hopes to support the Albanian cause.

In Italy came many scholar, poet and writer from Albanian blood ....remember to mention Crispi, that this son of this nation, who even today reigns the administration of Italy. The same attitude pro-figure of Crispi holds Naim too. In a review written in 1894 in Bucharest, in which are cited great names of the Albanians, in this summary is also the name of Crispi.

It cited:

*Mister Crispi, praised man  
felt and heard  
that gives honor today to Italy  
is the son of Albania*

Crispi did not deserve neither hopes, nor the good words. De Rada had understood very well the desire of the Italian borgesey to invade Albania and the hopes they had in Crispi were now disappeared. The albanian patriots knew the real intentions of Crispi and also of the italian politics. The time of the great Garibaldi as well as the war for freedom was now just a remote thought. The imperial politics of Italy was based upon the fact that Albania was considered as a strategic point from which Italy could hit the Austrian influence in the Adriatic.

The time of the great Garibaldi was now substituted from the imperialist politic of Crispi who was inspired by France. France's politics in years 1870 turned it into a great colonial power. Italian policy

violated Austrian interests in Albania, which cemented bilateral rivalry. The Austrian – Italian rivalry is strengthened as a result of clashes of interests. This bilateral flap conflicted with the Albanians projects to assure independence from Turkey. Apparently, Albania is now in danger of falling from Ottoman rule under Italian or Austrian rule.

The question is whether Francesco Crispi could realize his project of conquering the Balkans? What was his relationship with Albania? Crispi's policy ran against the Albanian interests. On the other hand - as Antonio Gramsci - states: "Crispi was a big talker, oratorical, without any strong economic support. Not only did not Italy have its capital to export, but it was forced to import foreign capital for its urgent needs". Antonio Gramsci provides useful information to confirm that Italy's financial situation was difficult and it became an obstacle to the realization of Crispi imperialist policy. On the other hand, even within Italy certain groups of interest were objecting such a fast political invasive undertaking in the Balkans. These objections related to the fact that Italy was both economically and politically weak. According to the Right Wing Italy should have a period of peace and security in order to regain strength. Shortly, it was not ready to undertake such a campaign in the Balkans. All these factors led to the demise of the Italian politics in Albania, however, Italy did not give up so easily from its plans in the Balkans, particularly in Albania. But let's return to the figure of Crispi. A lot of opinions, often controversial exist about Francesco Crispi. To Italy, Crispi was considered a great man specially his role in Italian politics, is greatly appreciated. The Italian deputy D'Arco addressed Crispi in parliament as follows: "Crispi, You are a great man, even too great for Italy. This shows the respect he had in the Italian politicians". However Francesco Crispi was Albanian and is named "*Albanese di cuore e di sangue.*", i.e., "*Albanian by blood and heart*".

Let's consider the following questions:

*"What did Crispi do in Albania? How is his politics evaluated?"*

Concerning this, there was much hope that Crispi would realize Albanian dream of independence. The brothers Frashëri hoped in him but Dora D'Istria or De Rada were skeptical indeed. But Crispi made public his idea in the Italian parliament in 1900 that: "Albania, the country of tough and brave men who helped Italy many times it has been in need, now is in a crossroad .... And like all other Balkan countries it has all the elements to have an autonomous government better than they enjoyed Bulgaria and Serbia. I think we have to fight for the rights of this nation in Europe ... We have them a debt...". This policy of Crispi to ensure the autonomy of Albania, as seen from Koli Xoxi, was a step toward ensuring a break from Ottoman rule to pass under the Italian protectorate. However I would not like to look at that simply in this plan. Providing autonomy from the Albanian side supported by the Italian side would be a good step to provide a break from the Ottoman Empire and the open road to independence insurance. The spread of Italian language education among young people will do its policy to gain more reliability towards Albania. Though Crispi contributed to the spread of Italian education it should not be forgotten his role in the spread of the Albanian language in many Italian schools or institutes. Crispi himself cited in one of the newspapers in Sicily, in January 18, 1898: "Dear Crispi, expressed hope for Albania to shake off as soon as possible the Muslim influence, and recommended, in particular students, to study the Albanian language and literature, promising that the government would soon establish a Chatedra in the Eastern Institute of Naples."

Crispi also does not deny its origins. He proclaimed his Albanian origin every time he could. Crispi supported the opening of the first Albanian language Congress held in Calabria early days of 1895. Crispi with the function of the Minister of the Italian Kingdom sent a congratulations telegram for the Congress. Although Francesco Crispi pursued a policy in favor of Italian politics in Albania and perhaps conditioned by the circumstances, he did not deny the Albanian origin although its contribution in favor of the Albanian question was not what was expected. Crispi was raised a monument in the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, as a symbol of the unity of Italy, for his contribution to the 1860 Revolution of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, aiming the unification of Italy.

### 3. Conclusions

The beginning of the twentieth century marks an increase of the national activity of the Italian - Albanians. The Literary – Cultural movement of Italian - Albanian patriots at the same time and the politic movement were assisting in resolving the national cause. In these movements, part of the contribution comes from Italian -Albanian colonies in regions such as Sicily, Calabria, Naples, etc...

Active participants in the movement to ensure the independence or autonomy of Albania were Italian - Albanian literary figures such as Girolamo De Rada, Vincenzo Darsa, Giuseppe Schirò, along

with them and Francesco Crispi. All Italian - Albanians had as an ultimate objective the liberation of Albania, but to realize this there were different opinions. A moderated thinking, embraced by Lorecchio, whose aim was to increase the sense of Albanian nationality, although continued to remain under the Ottoman Empire. Another way of thinking was the realization of a revolution through which the independence of the Motherland would be achieved. In 1900, Ismail Qemali issued a political program for the National Movement. In this program he presented his idea of consolidation of Albanian nationality, affirmation of Albanians as a separate nation and the recognition of national identity in the international arena. Italy held such a position as a collaboration between the two sides Arbëresh of Italy and the Albanians on the other side of the Adriatic would favor Italian politics to strengthen its influence in the Adriatic. A special merit to the inauguration of active politics toward east Adriatic, e especially toward Albania and the Albanian it had, no doubt, the Italian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi, originally Arberesh. His politic vision looked over the Italian government interests, to increase the influence of the peninsula of Balkan e especially in Albania. The project of Italy inaugurated by Crispi aimed to have a main position in Otranto Channel, possibility to allow it to penetrate in Balkan to expand the influence area into Adriatic and Jon. Although Francesco Crispi pursued a policy in favor of Italian politics in Albania and perhaps conditioned by the circumstances, he did not deny the Albanian origin although its contribution in favor of the Albanian question was not what was expected. However Albanian National Movement found Italian - Albanian support despite obstacles, this further encouraging the move. Italo-Albanians activity strengthened the national movement and simultaneously made famous the Albanian issue internationally.

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