



Research Article

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Political and Institutional Dimension of the Chairman of the High Council Aqif Pasha Elbasani, 1920-1924

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Abstract

Recognition of the intellectual, political and patriotic dimension of the members of the High Council, serves not only to recognize their real activity and contributions, but also to understand the political and institutional mentality of the elite of the time and the judgment and assessment they had of the activity of constitutional institutions. Recognition of members of the High Council has been and is limited. Whereas, the need to recognize them is not only a requirement for students of law faculties, but also for the academic staff of teaching in political and legal sciences that give lectures on the history of political institutions of the Albanian state, Constitutional Law, etc. Aqif Pasha Elbasani, Luigj Bumçi, Abdi Bej Toptani, and Dr. Mihal Turtulli were elected members of the High Council from the Lushnja Congress. While from 1920 when that institution was founded until 1925, when the Republic of Albania was founded, members of the UN were also Omer Pasha Vroni, Ndoc Pistulli, Refik Totani, Ndoc Çoba, Sotir Peci and Xhafer Ypi. Fan Noli and Ahmet Zogu also performed the function of the chairman of KN.

Keywords: Congress, Miss, High Council, Decree, Prefect

1. Introduction

Recognition of the intellectual, political and patriotic dimension of the members of the High Council, serves not only to recognize their real activity and contributions, but also to understand the institutional political mentality of the elite of the time and the judgment and appreciation they had for the activity of constitutional institutions.

I think that the recognition of the members of the High Council has been and is limited. Whereas, the need to recognize them is not only a requirement for students of law faculties, but also for the academic body of teaching in political and legal sciences that give lectures on the history of political institutions of the Albanian state, Constitutional Law, etc.

Aqif Pasha Elbasani, Luigj Bumçi, Abdi Bej Toptani, and Dr. Mihal Turtulli were elected members of the High Council from the Lushnja Congress. While from 1920 when that institution was founded until 1925, when the Republic of Albania was founded, members of the UN were also Omer Pasha Vroni, Ndoc Pistulli, Refik Totani, Ndoc Çoba, Sotir Peci and Xhafer Ypi. Fan Noli and Ahmet Zogu also performed the function of the chairman of HC.

Aqif Pasha Elbasani and Sotir Peci were also the chairman and vice-chairman of the Lushnja Congress.

Aqif Pasha Elbasani has performed the function of the chairman of the High Council, without being charged by the congress, but as it is understood, he took that function being the President of the Congress of Lushnja and a personality with political contributions, since the establishment of the state in 1912, as Prefect of Elbasan and interior minister in the government of Turhan Pasha

Përmet in the government of Prince Vid. Omer Pasha Vrioni and NdocPistulli were appointed members of the High Council by the National Council when Aqif Pasha Elbasani and Luigj Bumçi were dismissed. The notification for the dismissal of two members of the High Council was made by decree 743, dated 23.12.1921. The act of notification did not explain the reasons or circumstances that imposed that decision-making, but it was clarified that "the reasons would be communicated to the people with a special statement. (CSA, doc. 152, year. 1921, 36, p.1. letter no. 743 on 23. XII .921 of the National Council, by the chairman, Eshref Frashëri, sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, on the overthrow of the members of the High Council).

The other two members of the High Council, who were elected by the Lushnja Congress, AbdiToptani and dr. MihalTurtulli, the dismissal of their two colleagues from the National Council was considered a violation of the constitutional norms, formulated, in the Basics of the Kanun or the High Council, which was named, the Statute of Lushnja. The two members of the High Council clarified the reason for their resignation in a letter sent to the National Council on December 22, 1921. According to them: we are obliged to strongly beg the Parliament to accept our resignation. (CSA, doc. 147, year. 1921, 23, p.1. letter of the High Council 22.12.1921).

Instead of them, the parliament elected Refik Toptan and Sotir Peci. The dismissal and resignation of members of the High Council, elected by the Lushnja Congress, took place at the historic moment, when the political and institutional conflict in Albania had "infected" the main state institutions, perhaps even from a euphoria created by Albania's diplomatic recognition in the League of Nations. What surprises more is the tendency to resolve the conflict in a constitutional and institutional way. The reason for the dismissal of Aqif Pasha Elbasan and Luigj Bumçi was their behavior, not constitutional and institutional, in relations with the government and the National Council. Complicated political and institutional situations, such as those of March 1922 and the establishment of the Administrative Commission chaired by Fan Noli on May 23, 1924, as a parallel institution with the government, were accompanied by the resignation of Omer Vrioni, Refik Toptan, Ndoc Pistuli and Ndoc Çoba. When Noli came to power on June 10, 1924, he was only a member of the High Council, Sotir Peci. When Zogu returned on January 6, 1925, it was only Xhafer Ypi.

2. Political Dimension of Aqif Pasha Elbasan

Aqif Pasha Elbasani was the son of Mahmut Pasha Bicaku. Aqif Pasha Elbasani started his political activity early, when Albania was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Bicakci family was of the Bektashi Muslim faith, and was against religious fanaticism. This quality helped Aqif Pasha Elbasan, for a cooperation with people of other religious faiths.

Aqif Pasha participated in the Assembly of Dibra in 1908 and in July 1908 he was appointed president of the club "Union". At the initiative of the Elbasan patriots led by him, the first Albanian public school was opened in Elbasan. In 1909 he participated in the Congress of Elbasan. In April 1912, the Egyptian Union Association nominated Aqif Pasha for deputy in the Vilayet of Ioannina. (History of Albania, vol. II, Tirana, 1965, p.226-227; HHSTA, P.A.A. in AIH, Vj, 22-12-1232, report of the Austro-Hungarian consul from Shkodra, no.60, dated 11 April 1912, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna; Report of the Italian Consulate General in Ioannina, No. 165,30.3.1912, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome)

Dervish Hima, one of the prominent leaders of the Albanian National Movement, also nominated him as a candidate for the Vilayet of Manastir. (HHSTA, P.A.A. in AIH, Vj, 22-12-1232, report of the Austro-Hungarian consul from Manastiri, no.15, dated 09 March 1912, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna)

As one of the active members of the Albanian National Movement, he influenced the system of delegates going to the Assembly of Vlora. Aqif Pasha was one of the delegates who was appointed by the sub-prefecture of Peqin to the assembly, while he personally invited Mit 'hat Frashërin, Dr. MihalTurtullin and Abdyl Bey Ypin. They asked on behalf of the KNK not to fight against EsatToptan's forces. (CSA, page. 245, V.1913, D.6, fl.144, Telegram of Aqif Pasha, 12.01.1914.)

Aqif Pasha was a great political figure, but he tended to diminish the contribution and dimension of his personality. The General Directorate of State Archives of the People's Republic of

Albania on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the liberation of the homeland in 1959 made a publication on political history from 1912. In that publication are removed the protagonists who founded the institutions of the Lushnja Congress. The publication lacks the names of the main personalities of the organization and conduct of the first session on January 21, 1920, the lecture of Aqif Pasha and the name of the Vice President of the Congress, SotirPeci. (CSA, page. 79, V.1913, D.12, *Documente collection from Ismail Qemali, 12.01.1914.*)

On May 28, 1914, Prince Vidi appointed Aqif Pasha of Elbasan, interior minister in the government of Turhan Pasha of Përmet. (*Suleiman B. Vlora, "Memories", page 105*)

Aqif Pasha left Vidin on September 3, 1914. He settled in Bari, Italy. At the end of December 1914, the Italian armed forces were then stationed in Vlora. The occupation of Vlora is also associated with the departure of Aqif Pasha from Italy. The press at the time reported that "the Italian government had repeatedly driven Aqif Pasha and not allowed him to stay in Bari." (*Local Journal "Liri e Shqipërisë", Sofia 21.01.1915, page 1*)

In 1914 he became part of the "National Wing" in Shkodra with "Hoxha" Kadri Prishtina as chairman, and where SotirPeci, Eshref Frashëri, etc. were also part. (*History of Albania voll III, page 161*)

On February 14, 1915, the Austro-Hungarian Consul Halla informed Foreign Minister Baron Buriat that the "National Wing" had been established under the leadership of Kadri Prishtina. (*Mariglen Verli, "Aspect of creation and solution", page 71, "Toena press"*).

With the occupation of Shkodra in 1915 by Montenegrin forces, he was interned in Podgorica. In January 1916 the command of the Montenegrin armed forces signed the capitulation with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Aqif Pasha Elbasani with Luigj Gurakuqi, Sotir Peci, etc. gained freedom. On January 28, 1916, Aqif Pasha, Luigj Gurakuqi, Fejzi Alizoti, Bajram Curri, Sotir Peci, etc. addressed the Albanians with a public call, which invited them not to resist the Austrian forces that were entering the political borders of the Albanian state as they were coming as "protectors and liberators." The army should be seen as an ally, not an occupier. (*Lef Nosi "Historical Document", page 245-246*).

On February 18, 1916, on the initiative of Ahmet Zogu and the former ministers of Vid's government, the Commission for the Organization of the Congress in Elbasan was established. The Commission considered that the government of Turhan Pasha Përmeti had not resigned and according to the Organic Statute of Albania, in the absence of Prince Vid, Aqif Pasha could build a government, as, according to Article 11 of the Organic Statute of Albania, the function of Prince could be performed. one of the top state officials. (*Aleks Luarasi, "On Juridical Acts", page 32*).

Following the discussions, it was decided that former Interior Minister Aqif Pasha would convey his congratulations to Vid and, together with other ministers, begin the suspended work without resigning. The commission also organized a vote on the candidate-ministers to be selected by Aqif Pasha to form the government. The list included sixteen well-known personalities, of different faiths, and from different provinces. After the vote, Refik Bey Toptani also won 3 votes and Sotir Peci 1 vote. (*Lef Nosi "Historical Document", page 248-249*).

At the beginning of March 1916, Aqif Pasha made contact with the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vienna in Albania, August Kralit. (*M. Cami, Albania in the International Relations 1914-1918, Tirana, 1987, page. 256-257*).

On April 1, 1916, Trollmann issued a proclamation, for the establishment of all institutions, under the authority of the military command. (*HHSTA, PA.A. in AIH, Vj, 26-16-1608, report sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vienna*)

The creation of the new administration by Aqif Pasha prompted the command to increase pressure on the "head of government" Aqif Pasha Elbasan, who maintained contacts with the prefects of Central Albania, and even appointed Matdar deputy prefect, Hajdar Biloshmi. (*Lef Nosi "Historical Document", page 254-255*).

Aqif Pasha, realizing that the political movement would not be accepted by the Austro-Hungarians, on April 14, 1916, communicated to the mayors of Durrës and Berat that, for military reasons, his rule would temporarily pass to the Kingdom of Austria. Hungary, and according to Trollman's order, the prefectures would be transformed into sub-prefectures and would be directly linked to the commander-in-chief, according to the administrative division he had made. He

diplomatically advised the prefects, "not to be upset by his resignation, and the situation that had arisen ... Due to military action, the government of Albania will be temporarily made by the army of the great kingdom of Austria-Hungary and from this moment on I am leaving office". (*Lef Nosi "Historical Document", page 256*).

In June 1916, the magazine "Library of the Voice of Albania" dedicated a page to Aqif Pasha of Elbasan, accompanied by the inscription "We are very happy to publish today the face of the brilliant patriot Aqif I saw the people of Elbasan, who tried patriotism with two works so risky so many times and his life. This faithful man is adored by the entire Albanian people and expects many other services from him. Today it is located, for the service of the homeland, in Elbasan ". (*Journal "Voice of Albania", no. 8, page 19*).

Aqif Pasha, did not participate in the Assembly of Durres, "not because he was old, and afraid of bad weather and difficult roads", as he claimed the decision was neither overturned nor outdated, so he ordered the assembly to maintain "the form of government determined by the London Conference." (*Lef Nosi "Historical Document", page 300-301*)

Aqif Pasha, according to Hafiz Ali Korça, was one of the central figures in the organization of the Lushnja Congress, together with Abditoptan. For his high values, the Congress of Lushnja elected him chairman of the congress and a member of the High Council. As President Aqif Pasha, on February 2, 1920, he announced to the Paris Peace Conference that, "The National Assembly convened in Lushnja in one voice addresses the Peace Conference and demands full independence, as it does not accept any mandate or foreign protectorates". (*"Historical Material and Documents from the war of the Albanian People", page 17*)

On December 21, 1921, the National Council dismissed him from the High Council. He was not convicted by the law on political offenses, and was released on bail. In the summer of 1923, the British delegation in Vienna informed London that a new Albanian revolutionary committee had been formed in Vienna, under the leadership of Aqif Pasha, who according to them was planning to overthrow the government of Ahmet Zogu before the Constitutional Assembly elections with one Coup nationalist and would replace it with a government led by Aqif Pasha and Hasan Bey of Pristina. According to them, the conspirators also had people in the Albanian parliament and as the leading agent of that group they considered Fan Noli, or the bishop from Tirana - as they called him. (*FO 371/8535, p. 1148-1149, Telegram of Parr for Curzon, on the political situation in Albania, October 15, 1923*).

While Hasan Bey Prishtina was trying to collect highlanders from the Albanian mountains. They therefore thought that the Committee was confident in its success. Eyres informed Secretary of State Curzon from Tirana that Aqif Pasha and other members of the Revolutionary Committee were free to return to Albania whenever they wished, but his pride did not allow it, as long as his opponents are in power. With that information, Eyres rejected the thesis of preparing a Coup d'etat as Aqif Pasha was considered a righteous Albanian patriot, but unfortunately he was given a drink and was under the influence of his nephew, Irfan Beu, who was considered by Eyres, discredited as a man and as a politician. (*FO 371/8535, p. 1133-1136, Telegram of Parr for Curzon, on the political situation in Albania, August 27, 1923*).

Sejfi Vllamasi describes Aqif Pasha, in his book *Political Confrontations in Albania*, unassuming and honest, but also stubborn and angry. He took the rage so far that he inadvertently went against the interests of the country. According to him, Pasha broke up with Zogu for family reasons and this enmity became even fiercer when Zogu got engaged to Vërlac's daughter. He valued Aqif Pasha as a man of strong character, but without sufficient intelligence and culture. According to Vllamas, Aqif Pasha left the "National Wing" due to the support that this group gave to Ahmet Zogu. (*S. Vllamasi, Political Confrontations in Albania, 1875-1945, page. 188-189*)

While the diplomat of England Eyres, on March 18, 1921, in the confidential telegram he sent him, Earl Curzon regarded Aqif Pasha as a good patriot of the old, faithful school; AbdibeyToptan, a man liked by all, a patriot in favor of the old order of beys, Luigj Bumçi, was described as a high-intelligence intelligent man. While Dr. Mihal Turtulli, appreciation as the most intelligent and educated man in Albania, but who did not intend to stay in Albania. *FO 371/5726, p. 1138-1141, Telegram of Parr for Curzon, on the political situation in Albania Durrës, May 18, 1921*

Aqif Pasha passed away in 1926. On that occasion, the newspaper "LiriaKombëtare" praised

him as a "positive man", not treating him negatively like the beys and pashas. The political activity of Aqif Pasha of Elbasan was appreciated by the State of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in 1962, when it was decorated with the order "For patriotic activities" of class II. (*Local Journal "Freedom of Albania"*, page Sofia January 21, 1915, page 1).

Another member of the High Council was SotirPeci, the son of Jovan, who was born in Dardha on July 13, 1873 and passed away in Florina on April 9, 1932. He completed his primary and secondary education in Korça. At the age of 17 he went to Athens to study natural sciences. Peci also had evidence of the National University in Alexandria, Egypt, having passed medical examinations in 1892. (CSA, Doc.55, fond.76, page. 1 and 2).

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