

**GREEK POLICY OF CHAMS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to shine as clearly all aspects of diplomatic and political handling of Cham. Namely will analyze the policy pursued by the Greek government of Chams in the period 1914-1918. Although there was a period filled with tensions and difficulties for all Albanian people and not only for the Cham population in particular.

**Methodology:** Collection of information ranging from the archive documents, historical facts, testimonies of survivors. The paper will be built on an empirical approach rather than normative approach.

**Results:** This paper provides an analysis of overall policy that is followed on Greek Cham population during the First World War and specifically in the period 1914-1918. It is a period filled with conflicts, tension, hatred, aggression pursued by the Greek government to this indigenous population. All actions taken against her cannot be justified or tolerated regardless approach that we start to tackle this issue so delicate.

**Conclusions:** The paper aims to:

- To provide us with historical and political context of Cham During the period from 1914 to 1918.
- To treat the policy pursued by the Greek government in the period of the First World War concentration camp.
- It also aims to provide the country that occupies the issue internationally, agenda diplomatic powers of time.

**Keywords:** Diplomacy, Cham issue, the London Conference, Justice, Independence

**INTRODUCTION**

The Balkan region continues to generate debate among the nations who populate as a result of earlier decisions of the historical leaving many pending issues and open wounds of which remain among the most tragic Chame issue.<sup>1</sup> A problem that has not found a solution nowadays. A tragedy where suffering and wounds which cannot be left on the trail of forgetfulness.

This paper provides an analysis of overall Greek policy that is followed on Chame population during the First World War and specifically in the period 1914-1918. It is a period filled with conflicts, tension, hatred, aggression pursued by the Greek government to this indigenous population. All actions taken against her cannot be justified or tolerated regardless this approach we start to tackle this so delicate issue.

We should be recalled also that the period for which we speak had to do with a difficult situation not only for Albania but also for many other countries because it was World War and touched every country. In such an environment cannot pretend to have diplomacy, so more with a neighboring country like Greece, which had the ambition to "beneficiary" and to

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<sup>1</sup> Rudina Jasini, Gentian Zyberi, Klentiana Mahmutaj, Legal Remedies for Resolving the Cham Issue, Institute of Cham Studies, Tirane, 2010, pg 5

expand its territory at the expense of the Albanian people. "Greed" Albanian lands her on the growing disaster even more, although not by anyone kritkohej such a claim and so absurd. The paper offers two main aspects that have to do, namely to:

-A summary overview of the historical framework of the difficulties and hardship that came was experiencing population in this period as a result of unfair policies and faulty undertaken by the greek government.

-Also addressed the Chame issue country that occupies internationally in the period of the First World War.

From the above analysis given the historical context, political and diplomatic events we glance injustices that have been done this population that even though they have spent so much time of the First World War (period which we took under consideration in this paper) back issue no solutions.

### **Historical and political framework of Cham**

If you want to talk about the political and historical context of the case cham after should be back in time to say that this is an issue for the time which is as early as history itself of this neighboring country. The problem is as old cham, as the Greek State. Since the early days of its independence, Greece paid proper attention throughout the preparation of conditions for the invasion of Epirus and Hellenization of the Albanian population.<sup>2</sup> In this paper we take the analysis period 1914-1918, but the problem actually dates back even earlier.

Greece, which in 1822 began efforts Chameria and annexation of Southern Albania.<sup>3</sup> Since then and thereafter begins systematically a wild policy and more violent over the Cham population. To achieve its goals predatory, Greek authorities never respected Cham Albanian population, showing ungrateful towards assisting people that this valuable historical and historically have given this region over the centuries for the Greek people.<sup>4</sup>

Persistence extraordinary Greek government for the annexation of Southern Albania and alliances that built it in the context of this objective, would pose a risk of threat more serious, continuous and long-term for the state and the Albanian nation, because he brought this on a pressure strong and prevented the consolidation.<sup>5</sup> After the annexation of Chameria in 1913 until today, this population during all these years under the rule of the Greek state, no enjoyment of any human right that belongs national. Greek authorities, based on the concept of the absurd denial of the existence of ethnic groups in the territory of their own, have pursued a policy of chauvinistic detailed.<sup>6</sup> This policy wrong also left deep traces on other generations who also faced with numerous problems not only in economic terms but also moral, social, etc. All historical documents, testimonies of survivors of the undisputed facts, empirical data that we presented show a wild pursue genocide on an innocent population of since a name called, tragedy.

Greeks crimes in Chameri was discussed at the Conference of Ambassadors in London. I put forward the incontrovertible facts, the Greek representative tried to deceive, stating that for

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<sup>2</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 12

<sup>3</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 12

<sup>4</sup> Hasan Minga, Hilmi Saqe, *Genocidi Grek kunder Camerise Vazhdon*, ARBERIA, Tirane, 2006, fq 8

<sup>5</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 26

<sup>6</sup> Hasan Minga, Hilmi Saqe, *Genocidi Grek kunder Camerise Vazhdon*, ARBERIA, Tirane, 2006, 7

the offenses committed by the rebel gangs and arteve, not his government was responsible.<sup>7</sup> The Greek government did not take no responsibility for the situation in the next.

Parallel Greek government was implementing a policy of violence and terror even beyond Chameria in Southern Albania, which was already part of the state.<sup>8</sup> Delimitation of Greek-Albanian followed the terrible events of the years 1913-1915, which, by impartial observers, are considered as crimes, not minority were caused by domestic, but by regular army troops Greek.<sup>9</sup> The Greek government again did not take responsibility and publicly denied that it had anything to do with such difficult situations that passing this population.

Athens did not recognize as a national minority Chams were not accorded them Greek citizenship, nor recognized the Albanian nationality. Chams not have the right to vote, the right to be elected in the local administration, had no school in their native language, at a time when the Albanian government had opened tens of Greek schools in Albania in Greek for Greek-speaking minority.<sup>10</sup> In this way the Greek government had violated all kinds of human rights since the basic rights and continuing thereafter to civil, political, economic, social, etc.

Greece having annexed Chameria, had decided to forcefully annex the Southern Albania, using the military occupation. To achieve this goal, as South Albania baptized with the name "Northern Epirus" (Northern Epirus), the Greek government began to organize here and in Greece, a move called "Northern-Epirote". This move will be announced as established by the local population "Greek" against "occupation" of the eventual from Albanians in southern Albania.<sup>11</sup>

For the realization of the plan to its annexationist, Greece had secured the support of Serbia, with which since 1 June 1913, had concluded a secret agreement to separate Albania in two areas of impact, which would have a boundary between their river Shkumin. The campaign of ethnic cleansing taking place in parallel to the two provinces against Albanian, Chameria and Southern Albania.<sup>12</sup>

State and difficult situations that passing this population is clearly evidenced by the documents of this period. Here we present one of these documents:

Punet e ketushme jane aq te liga....., sa qe nuk mund te rrefehen me pende. Kerkush nuk urdheron gjene e tij: aren, vreshten, ulline, etj. Ai qe eshte i zoti, rremben gjene e te pafuqishmit. Kujt i rrembejne aren, kujt i mbledhin ulline, kujt i prishin vreshten dhe kopshtin dhe kujt i vjedhin te gjallat. Keto ngjane dite per dite dhe s'guxon njeri te qahet, se pasi te guxoje nje te beje qarje, pervec qe do te humbase 7 grosh, domethene 5 per te shkruarit e azruallit dhe dy per higras, po do ta hedhin edhe neburg per te denuarat virgji...<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 29

<sup>8</sup> Hasan Minga, *Cameria nje Veshtrim Historik*, Tirane, 2006, fq 34

<sup>9</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 29

<sup>10</sup> P. Xhufi, B. Kucuku, H. Isufi, D. Koci, *Cameria Veshtrim Historik dhe Etno-Kulturor*, Instituti i Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2015, fq 138

<sup>11</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 30

<sup>12</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 3

<sup>13</sup> Hajredin Isufi, *Cameria Nepermjet Kronikave te Kohes 1902-1940*, PEGI, Tirane, 2007, fq 44

From the foregoing, as well as numerous documents that today our disposal we are able to admit that the Greek government pursued a policy of systematic pressure on the Cham population. Although violence against Albanians in the form of sporadic, not never discontinued.<sup>14</sup>

The question of Chame tragedy was not only memories of the two countries that conflicting day to day even more, but was treated and discussed internationally.

Although the Cham issue was discussed in the international arena environments which absorbed the attention of the international situation that was going through this difficult population did not improve and still found no solution.

### **The chame issue in the diplomatic agenda of the powers of the time**

The chame issue born as problem depicts relations between the two countries, Albania and Greece, since the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was legislated after the decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913, where Chameria and other areas of Albania was secede without right, annexations are satisfied with their neighboring states.<sup>15</sup> Albanian lands always been seen as the only alternative to achieve the absurd dreams of neighbors to expand their territories at the expense of the Albanian people.

For the realization of the plan to its annexationist, Greece had secured the support of Serbia, with which since in 1 June 1913, had concluded a secret agreement to separate Albania in two areas of impact, which would have a boundary between their river Shkumbin.<sup>16</sup> Greek strategy of ethnic cleansing of indigenous population Cham began with expropriation.<sup>17</sup>

In the end October 1914, the de facto Greece invasion turned into occupation de jure, when the invasion was introduced from 6 European Great Powers signed the Treaty of London, 1913. This recognition was a step towards the 1913 review of decisions opens that materialized with the signing of the Treaty of Secret London, 26 April 1915 between the entente powers and Italy. During the period 1914 - 1918. Albania, as all the Balkans, turned into a battlefield, it is about the First World War. Although there are turbulent period, efforts in the Balkans for capture of Albania does not cease.<sup>18</sup>

Albanian government efforts to internationalize the chame issue not stopped in any moment, either by the government or by the first and the others that followed further. Albania's new government after the war, came to the Paris Peace Conference and the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Allied Powers, not only by the Cham reflected horrendous situation, but

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<sup>14</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut i Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 41-4

<sup>15</sup> Hasan Minga, Hilmi Saqe, *Genocidi Grek kunder Camerise Vazhdon*, ARBERIA, Tirane, 2006, fq 5

<sup>16</sup> Beqir Meta, *Tragjedia Came*, Institut i Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 30

<sup>17</sup> Hajredin Isufi, *Cameria*, Studime Historike-Sociologjike Shek XIII-XX, PEGI, Tirane, 2006, fq 18

<sup>18</sup> Robert Elsie, *The Cham Albanians of Greece : A Documentary History*, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, London, 2013

seeking their return and repossession.<sup>19</sup> The picture of the misery of the Chams and their requests were submitted after the Paris Conference.<sup>20</sup>

Precisely for these reasons, the status of the Albanian-Greek relations was always honors and international position of Albania extremely serious. This Greek government policy makes it possible for the policy of the Great Powers. Documents from the Foreign Office appears that the UK, knowingly tolerated the ethnic cleansing of Chameria.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the commitment of the respective governments, the chame issue always remained an unresolved issue and left in silence by the powers of the time. Diplomatic agenda seemed more occupied with matters of importance not constitute a tragedy like that of the Cham population. The voice of an innocent people every day confronted with injustice, suffering, difficulties and misery he was never heard from diplomats time. A voice that was left over in silence as if nobody had fault though historical documents, data empirical evidence of survivors, speak for a country of such a situation designed for their personal benefits. For it was our Greece neighbor, which did not accept any historical truths time acted in such a way as to change the role of the population came to blame the latter as scenarios of this environment.

After failures to solve the issue came from European powers Albanian government and Western diplomatic addresses mainly the United States. Historical documents that prove something are many, but we are listing only one of them:

*“Qe nga shpallja e luftes evropiane, Italia, Serbia, Mali i Zi dhe Greqia, larg respektimit te teresise se ketij shteti sovran, te krijuar nga fuqite e medha evropiane, ndjekin qellimin e hapur te pushtimit te teritoreve te tij, te shtenies ne dore te kopeve te tij, te djegies se fshatrave...*

*Perpara kaq shume padrejtesive te pameshirshme, asnje komb i Evropes nuk e ka ngritur zerin. Republika jone e madhe vetem ka derguar nje anije te ngarkuar me ushqime per nje komb vella, te mbetur pa mbrojtje dhe qe po vdes nga uria.*

*Ne terheqim vemendjen krejt te vecante dhe simpatine e qeverise se Shteteve te Bashkuara ndaj kombit shqiptar, me i vjetri i Evropes, i cili e do ne shkallen me te larte lirine qe i kane lene trashegim te paret e tij.*

*Ne u lutemi fuqive publike te kene deshiren e mire, ne castin e perfundimit te paqes ne Evrope, per te nderhyre qe te behet e njohur liria e ketij populli te shtypur dhe te merren per te garancite siguruese per ruajtjen e te gjitha te drejtave te tij.”<sup>22</sup>*

From the note that what we said so far and commitment of the Albanian efforts to resolve these injustices were numerous and did not stop at any moment, although internationals never gave a final solution to this tragedy.

<sup>19</sup> Hasan Minga, Hilmi Saqe, Genocidi Grek kunder Camerise Vazhdon, ARBERIA, Tirane, 2006, fq 13

<sup>20</sup> Hasan Minga, Hilmi Saqe, Genocidi Grek kunder Camerise Vazhdon, ARBERIA, Tirane, 2006, fq 13

<sup>21</sup> Beqir Meta, Tragjedia Came, Institut I Studimeve per Camerine, Tirane, 2007, fq 141

<sup>22</sup> Kaliopi Naska, “Dokumenta për Çamërinë 1912-1939”, DITURIA, Tiranë, 1999, fq 16

(Komiteti shqiptar i Lozanes, kerkon mbeshtetjen e Qeverise Amerikane per mbrojtjen e Shqiperise nga copetimi i metejshe i trojeve te saj prej Serbise, Malit te Zi, e Greqise)

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite extensive analysis and debate of the historical background, political and legal numerous conflicts occurred in the Balkans, we conclude that no proper attention was paid to the tragedy of the Cham people. In this short historical period comprising specifically the period of the First World War, which we treated with the above appear in the scene suffering tragedy cam ethnic community from unfair policies followed by the Greek government. Such policies and behavior are the product not only of the Greek government but also other countries which saw the expansion of their territories at the expense of the Albanian people. Today there is an undeniable historical record that demonstrates the powerful offenses committed against cam community, against any attempt of the Greek denial.<sup>23</sup> Often these empirical evidence, these data inalienable not be considered to give a final solution to this issue so left in limbo.

Suffering and difficulties that passed this population should not be neglected, although it is a very long time from the time when they occurred. It cannot be denied such a tragedy from anyone, even though the country was conceptualized and designed the silent if it had not at fault.

Chameria voice is not heard by international diplomacy even exist a number of methods and means for settling disputes and conflicts between two or more countries in the international arena.

The first spokesman for the tumultuous events in Chameria and in Southern Albania became Midhat Frasheri.<sup>24</sup> He tried to reflect the reality in the eyes of the international Albanian although they seemed everything to normal and nothing extraordinary.

In 1914-1918 period had to do with the First World War and any other country that was affected by this war, do not pretend to have diplomacy at this time or in Albania. The only claim is that for the period that the actors treated the international arena need to keep a fair and neutral position.

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<sup>23</sup> Rudina Jasini, Gentian Zyberi, Klentiana Mahmutaj, Legal Remedies for Resolving the Cham Issue, Institute of Cham Studies, Tirane, 2010, pg 15

<sup>24</sup> Hajredin Isufi, Buletini i Institutit te Studimeve per Camerine, Nr. 8, Tirane, 2014, fq 6

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