



# Free Albania

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*A Momentous Situation  
Confronting  
the American Board*

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By

SECRETARY JAMES L. BARTON

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*AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS, BOSTON, MASS.*

## Introductory Word

This statement was prepared at the request of the Prudential Committee of the American Board, in order that they might have before them in a comprehensive way all the facts bearing upon the Albanian situation. Its reading on April 22, 1913, impressed the Committee so deeply that the circulation of the document seemed desirable. The facts about Albania, its topography, history, religious attitude, the strange outcome of the Balkan War as affecting this land and the wonderful opening for Christian work are here presented in an impressive way. In the one hundred years of history of the Board no such opportunity as this has confronted us. As Secretary Barton so well says, "The situation is momentous."

The officers of the Board are anxious to give this pamphlet as wide a circulation as possible among those who follow the great national movements as they affect the Kingdom of Heaven. When you have read the pamphlet, please pass it on.

C. H. P.

# **FREE ALBANIA**

## **A Momentous Situation Confronting the American Board**

**BY SECRETARY JAMES L. BARTON**

There has never been a definitely defined boundary of Albania, but at this writing the Powers of Europe are drawing the outline of what we have every reason to believe is soon to become a separate and largely independent country of Europe. It is located on the Eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, the western part of Macedonia, reaching north to near the present border of Montenegro, and south to the old limit of Greece, with an indefinite boundary on the southeast, east and northeast. It includes a large part of four Turkish vilayets, Scutari, Monastir, Janina and Kosobo. The area occupied is mountainous and rugged throughout, very fertile in its valleys.

### **THE PEOPLE.**

This region has been inhabited by the Albanians for centuries. They call themselves the "Eagle People" and are divided up into tribes or clans, each living under its own leader, the leadership being hereditary. In the four vilayets as above outlined there are at the present

time a considerable number of Bulgarians, Greeks, Ser-  
vians and Turks, although the preponderance of the  
population within the entire four vilayets, taking their  
population as a whole, is made up of Albanians. Yet



**Albanian Highlanders**

Photograph by Underwood & Underwood, N.Y.

there are sections of some of these vilayets where the  
Albanians are in the minority.

There have been various estimates as to how many  
Albanians there are within the above outlined territory.  
There are few who would put the number less than

two millions, and some have estimated as high as four millions. It is probable that a careful estimate would place the number at about three millions within the territory itself. Under the misrule of the Turk during the last generation or two, many Albanians have gone over to Italy, and a considerable number have emigrated to other countries, there being several thousand in the United States, with colonies in Boston, Natick, Jamestown, New York and in other parts of the country.

The Albanians are proverbially hardy, brave, aggressive, a freedom-loving and intelligent people. Their bravery in battle is well known. An Albanian deems it a privilege to die for his country and his people. Under their method of government, when the father falls in battle, the eldest son takes his place, and this process continues as long as there is a male living; then the wife takes the place of the last fallen male and the succession runs down through the entire family of daughters.

Before the discovery of America by Columbus, the Mohammedans under Murad II, and Mohammed II, endeavored to send their armies through Albania for the conquest of Europe. These forces of Turkey, which had hitherto been unconquered, met the hardy Albanian warriors, and in thirty-two successive battles, so history runs, the Turks were defeated, under the Albanian commander, Scanderbeg, and the tide of Mohammedan conquest into the north and west was turned backward, and Europe was saved from the domination of Islam. Scanderbeg was the last great general of Albania, and

after his death, the people have shown but little constructive national unity, but they have not lost their vigorous spirit or physical force.

#### RELIGION.

While Albania was able to turn back the tide of Mohammedanism from Europe, it was not long before their country was conquered by the Sultan, and Albania became a part of the Turkish empire. Nearly all of the race by force became at least nominally Mohammedans. Some, however, retained their membership in the Greek Church, and in subsequent years some have become members of the Catholic Church, but at the present time it is estimated that between two-thirds and three-fourths, at the lowest estimate, of the Albanian people are nominal Mohammedans. The fact, however, remains that their Mohammedanism is more distinctly nominal than probably that of any other so-called Moslem race. It has been frequently stated by Albanians who have come to the United States that there are few who are able, alone and unaided, to go through the four acts of prayer required of every loyal Mohammedan five times a day. They say that the mosques are poorly attended and that the Moslem prayers are but little said by the rank and file of the Albanian people. Nevertheless they have retained the name "Mohammedan" and have been counted by the Sultan of Turkey as belonging to the Mohammedan religion.

## RELATION TO TURKEY.

As has been already stated, the Albanians have been for generations under the control of the Sultan of Turkey. Abdul Hamid put special reliance upon men whom he selected from among this powerful race to hold high places in both civil and military departments in the government. Some of the most aggressive and effective Grand Viziers and generals of the army have been Albanians. They have held places of large responsibility and trust and have been faithful to their masters. At the same time the Albanians as a whole have been feared by the Turk. Their independent, aggressive spirit, and the fact that their religion sits so lightly upon them, has made the Sultan of Turkey unusually watchful of that remote section of his empire, dangerously near to the more civilized races of Europe. Their ambition for education for their children in their native language has been systematically and most effectually crushed. They were forbidden under Abdul Hamid to conduct schools in the Albanian language, the government insisting that all Albanian children should learn Turkish and Arabic-Turkish, the language of their master, and Arabic, the language of their religion.

After the uprising of the Young Turk Party, and while the whole question was in doubt as to what steps the Sultan of Turkey would take, 100,000 of the Albanians gathered in Ferizovitch, and from that centre sent a telegram to Abdul Hamid saying: "We favor the constitution. If you don't grant it we shall march on Con-

stantinople." This seemed to prove the turning point to the halting Sultan and within a few hours after the receipt of this dispatch, he proclaimed the constitution. To this constitution the Albanians were loyal until it became apparent that under the rule of the Young Turk Party they were not to be given the degree of liberty that had been promised them, and a series of oppressive and cruel campaigns were begun from Constantinople which threw the Albanians into an attitude of revolt against Turkish rule.

While in this general attitude, the Balkan war broke out, in which the Albanians as a race had no conspicuous part. None of the four allies were ready to promise autonomy to Albania, and they had already had experience at the hand of the Turkish ruler of what they might expect in case they remained under Turkey. They have taken a very neutral attitude during this war, since it was well known to them that the four allies had decided before the war began that Albania should be divided up among them.

A Congress of Albanians recently assembled in Trieste made petition to the European Powers for a degree of independence, and the indications as now reported in the press, point to a setting apart of a specific section of Albania to bear their name and to have an autonomous form of government. Indications point to a liberal area within which the great majority of the population will be Albanians.



## RELATION TO MISSIONS.

The European Turkey Mission of the American Board has from the beginning been interested in this powerful race. Dr. Elias Riggs early in his missionary career was thrown among the Albanians for a brief period, during which time he practised his marvelous talent in preparing a grammar of the Albanian language. This grammar remained in manuscript until within the last ten years, when it was brought to light and proved to be of great value to the committee of the European Turkey Mission appointed to look into the matter of the Albanian language.

Dr. Thomson, a former missionary of the American Board, was deeply interested in the Albanians and left a small legacy for the purpose of opening work among them. One of the missionaries of the European Turkey Mission, Mr. Baird, has given some time to the study of the Albanian language. In the meantime, through the efforts of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the New Testament has been printed in Albanian and has been considerably circulated. It is however in need of careful revision.

Our own mission prepared an alphabet for the writing of the Albanian language, since they had no character of their own. This alphabet has been adopted by an Albanian educational congress, held since the proclamation of a constitution for Turkey, as the one to be used in their own educational system.

Some twenty-five years ago, Mr. Gerasim D. Kyrias, an Albanian leader, became an earnest Christian and devoted himself to the end of his life in unsparing efforts for the education and spiritual redemption of his people. He died early life, but two sisters and a brother took up his work. Under their effort a school for girls was established in Kortcha, one of the leading cities in southeastern Albania, and during all these years of change and difficulty that school has continued with increasing influence and power.

At the Albanian educational congress, held right after the proclamation of the constitution, and at the second congress, a year later, the only woman delegate was Miss Sevasti D. Kyrias, one of the sisters, who, for nineteen years was principal of this first Christian school for Albanian girls. She was succeeded by her sister, who this summer graduated from Oberlin, she herself becoming the wife of Mr. Christo A. Dako, an Albanian young man from one of its leading families, and a graduate of the University of Bucharest and of the Theological School at Oberlin. The girls' school at Kortcha, occupying a site purchased largely through the effort of Mr. Kyrias, in which the Mission co-operated, is still occupied by this school. This school has been liberally aided by the Woman's Board of the Interior.

#### MISSIONARIES TO ALBANIA.

In 1907, a fund of \$25,000 was given to the American Board by two interested ladies for the purpose of opening

a definite missionary work among the Albanians and in Albania it being expected that this money would cover the expense of that work for a period of five years.

Rev. and Mrs. Phineas B. Kennedy were appointed under that fund and sent to Kortcha. A year later they were joined by Rev. and Mrs. C. Telford Erickson, who located first in Tirana, in western Albania, and later



**View of Elbasan**

went to Elbasan, which position they have held, under many vicissitudes, until six months ago, when they were expelled, by order of the Servians who had taken possession of that city. Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy have remained upon the ground during the capture of the city of Kortcha by the Greeks, and are there at this writing, so far as is known. (They were later expelled by the Greeks).

These missionaries have learned the Albanian language and have made many warm friends among the Albanian leaders. There has been associated with them Mr. Tsilka, the husband of Madam Tsilka, who was in captivity with Miss Ellen M. Stone, and who is himself a former student in Union Seminary, New York; also Mr. Dako, already referred to. This has given as a working force in Albania, four American missionaries and five native Albanian Christian workers. Much has been done in the way of breaking down prejudice and in enlightening the minds of the Albanians as to Protestant Christian missionary work.

At this writing Mr. and Mrs. Erickson are in London; Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy are in Kortcha; Mr. and Mrs. Tsilka in prison at Elbasan for several weeks, they being under the suspicion of the Servians, who occupied that city, are now at liberty; Mrs. Dako is in Monastir; and Mr. Dako and Miss Kyrias are in Oberlin. Mr. Dako will be ready to go back at once to Albania; Miss Kyrias expects to remain another year to further complete her studies in Oberlin, in preparation for work for her people.

No buildings have been built for the missionaries. An attempt was made to purchase land, first at Tirana, and later at Elbasan, but the hostile Turkish government refused to confirm title. This became a matter of diplomatic correspondence and conference covering two or three years and is still unsettled, and probably will remain

unsettled until the political status of Albania is established. The girls' school property in Kortcha is held in the name of Mr. Kyrias, the son of the original founder, who has expressed his readiness to pass the property over to the American Board Mission just as soon as they are ready to receive it. Apart from this school in Kortcha, we are free to enter whatever city seems fitting and begin a permanent work for the race.

#### EFFECTS OF THE BALKAN WAR.

The Balkan War has put a complete change upon the whole Albanian question. It is resulting in freeing Albania from Turkish rule and so from Mohammedan domination. Leading Albanians have spoken freely of their intention to throw off Mohammedanism. They claim that they were made Mohammedans only by compulsion, and now that the compulsion is removed, they are perfectly free to adopt that religion which in their judgment will be best suited to their needs. Leading Albanians have so informed Mr. Erickson, and also they have written to Mr. Dako to the same effect, and others have talked freely with Mr. Gibbons, one of the teachers in Robert College. Information has also come from Mr. Charles R. Crane of Chicago, who last year took an extended trip through the heart of Albania, and who made the friendly acquaintance of a large number of Albanian leaders, that they are ready to repudiate their Mohammedanism completely and desire to become Protestants

rather than members of the Greek or of the Catholic Church.

This is a situation which the American Board has never faced before, and probably no other missionary board has ever faced a people of this character, number-



**Graduates of the Kortcha  
Girls' Boarding School**

ing between two and three millions, who through their leaders declare it to be their fixed purpose to change their religion and who express themselves freely as wanting the Protestant missionary, with the Christian school and Christian instruction, to come in and help

them reorganize their race upon the new religious basis. The situation is so momentous that it is startling, and one needs pause before such an overwhelming responsibility.

We are face to face, therefore, with the following important facts with reference to Albania:

(1) The Albanians are soon to give up, if they have not already given up, their allegiance to Mohammedanism.

(2) They are expressing themselves on all sides as desiring to come into close and intimate relations with Protestants, they having petitioned the European Powers to give them a Protestant prince.

(3) They turn to our missionaries as their best friends and ask that the American Board strengthen its work among them and send out those who will help them in their religious, social, moral and educational reconstruction.

(4) There is no other missionary society that is in Albania, or, so far as we know, that contemplates entering that field.

(5) We have been on the ground with our missionaries and working force for six years, and have already won the respect and confidence of the people.

(6) There have already been published, through Mr. Dako, five text-books for use in Albanian schools, and there have already been prepared twice that number ready for publication.

(7) The significance of Christianized Albania to the Christianization of the Mohammedans of Turkey can hardly be over stated. We have looked upon the

Armenians as the line of approach to the Moslems, and there is no question that the Armenian race has exerted a powerful influence upon the Mohammedans throughout Asia-Minor, but, however effective that approach may be, it cannot for a moment compare with what can be done with educated and Christianized Albanian workers. The Albanian himself, held in high esteem by Moslems everywhere, will find an access to the confidence of the Moslems of Turkey, and can command a hearing, far beyond that which any Armenian, or Greek, or any member of an ancient Christian race can possibly expect.

There are perhaps ten millions of Mohammedans in Turkey looking to the American Board for their Christianization, and at the present time the barriers which their religion, superstition and traditions have thrown around them are rapidly crumbling. It is inconceivable that we could have a better line of approach to that entire population than through this Albanian race, that not only is waiting for us to send Christian missionaries and teachers in to them, but is eagerly inviting us to do so.

The situation is one which the Prudential Committee of the Board cannot lightly turn aside. In all the history of the Board a condition of equal significance has never before been faced. It is one which we cannot deny or avoid. Certainly the Lord had some plan in mind when He led the Board into Albania six years ago and placed us there for a time like this. This opportunity must not be looked upon with indifference but something should be done at once to meet the crisis and to meet it fairly.





**Workers of Kortcha Station**

Standing—left to right—Miss Hftimova, Miss Kyrias, Miss Petro, Miss Janaqis  
Seated—left to right—Mr. Kennedy, Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Dako, Mr. Dako

## SUGGESTIONS.

(1) Every encouragement can be given to Mr. Erickson in London to press his presentation of the opportunity and needs in Albania upon the English people. He has not with good success so far. The English religious papers have given him a wide hearing and he is having opportunities to speak on every side. The papers speak with enthusiasm of his appeal.

(2) Mr. Erickson can be called over here in the autumn in preparation for a general campaign to raise the money necessary to start this work in Albania upon a fairly substantial basis.

(3) The Prudential Committee should recognize at once the need of two new missionary families for Albania, one an ordained man who has had experience in teaching and training in pedagogy, and a physician of the widest possible equipment.

(4) In addition to these two new missionaries, a medical work should be established at some centre yet to be decided upon, at an expense of from \$12,000 to \$15,000, this to include the purchase of a site, the building of a hospital and dispensary and equipment of the same, and the erection of a residence for the doctor.

(5) A boys' school should be established at some point yet to be decided upon, probably in the same city with the hospital, at an expense of from \$12,000 to \$15,000, this to include the purchase of site and erection of the building, and the residence of the missionary in charge.

(6) Two new houses should be built for the two missionaries now appointed to Albania, at an expense of \$3,000 each, including the site.

(7) The girls' school, whether continued at Kortcha or transferred, should be put upon a thorough working basis. This already has several thousand dollars in hand, beside the site. The Woman's Board will probably begin an aggressive campaign in co-operation with the Prudential Committee for putting that school upon a firm basis.

Mr. Dako tells us that in order to influence and hold the Albanians the work must be started in a way that will command their respect. This will require permanent buildings which give the impression of adequacy for the immediate needs.

The immediate requirements, therefore, for this work in Albania are as follows:—

Salary of four missionary families, with allowances, etc., average \$1,100 each,	\$4,400
Outfit and traveling expenses out of two new missionary families,	2,200
Two missionary houses, including new site, at \$3,000 each,	6,000
Hospital, with doctor's residence, dispensary, equipment, with site,	15,000
Boys' school, with residence, site, equipment,	15,000
Girls' school, additional, for house, new site and school building,	12,000
Additional annual expense for the conduct of the work after establishment at the beginning on the above basis,	9,000
Total,	\$63,600

The total immediate need, therefore, for putting this work upon an initial successful basis, is from \$60,000 to \$65,000, with \$10,000 a year to keep it moving on with aggressiveness and force.

When we consider that we are dealing with a powerful race of three millions of people, who have already a well recognized influence in all parts of Macedonia and throughout the Turkish empire, and when we bear in mind that this is a Mohammedan race, ready to turn from Mohammed to Christ, the amount asked for seems trivial, in face of the inevitable results. The situation is such that \$100,000 in the next two years could be used for establishing a more extensive plant and putting it upon a more fundamental and aggressive basis.

With what Mr. Erickson will secure in England, and the interest which he will there arouse, and in the face of the present interest in the Turkish empire in general, and in Mohammedanism in particular, it would seem as if the \$60,000 is not too large to aim for as a special fund to be raised at once for this Albanian work.

#### EDITORIAL NOTE.

Since the above document was prepared several changes have occurred in the location of the Albanian missionaries. Mr. and Mrs. Erickson are at home on furlough. He will spend considerable time in addressing churches, clubs and groups of interested persons on the present situation in Albania. Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy are in Albania, Mr. Tsilka is in charge of a boys' school in

Elbasan, Mrs. Dako is opening the girls' school in Kortcha and Mr. Dako and Miss Kyrias are upon their way back to share the work in Kortcha, which city has been taken out of the hands of Greece and assigned by the Powers to Albania.

### THE FUTURE OF ALBANIA.

#### *A Talk with an American Missionary.*

(“British Weekly” Special.)

The Rev. C. Erickson, of the American Board of Missions, is visiting London after five years in Albania. He is a Yale graduate, still in the early prime of life and a speaker of remarkable powers. He and his colleague have been driven from their posts by the Servians, of whose behaviour to the Albanian people Mr. Erickson gives a most disquieting account. “The Servian troops,” he says, “have committed many crimes. They have taken bread from the houses, plundered shops, outraged women, and killed men in cold blood.”

Mr. Erickson cherishes high hopes for the future of Albania. “The people,” he says, “desire a Protestant prince. When the war is over the independence of Albania will be assured, and under a Protestant ruler its down-trodden people might hope at last for peace and progress. I greatly wish that Prince Bernadotte of Sweden could be persuaded to undertake the task. He is a man of consecrated character, and would have the support and sympathy of all Protestant peoples.”

Mr. Erickson believes that after the war, the million Moslems of Albania may embrace Christianity. Thousands of them are already disposed to make this change, and their conversion might be the key to the whole situa-

tion as regards Islam. He speaks enthusiastically of the character of the Albanians. "There is not a kinder, gentler people in Europe. They combine the elements of strength, virility and courage with the most loyal and tender devotion. They are the oldest race in South-Eastern Europe, and have been fighting for many centuries to maintain their racial independence. Their language is more akin to Latin than to the Slavic or Turkish group. Three religions now divide the country — the Moslem, the Greek Orthodox, and the Roman Catholic Churches. My colleague and I," added the missionary, "have had no easy task in keeping our feet on the ground. The Turks tried to drive us out. We have twice been expelled and twice imprisoned. My colleague has been imprisoned at Elbasan as a spy. His only crime is that he is an Albanian."

Mr. Erickson's high credentials and his unique experience give a special value to his narrative. He is perhaps the only man in England to-day who can speak with authority on the political and religious state of the ancient Albanian people.

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