

## The plot against King Zog I of Albania in Vienna

**Blerina Xhelaj**

*University "Ismail Qemali", Vlora, Albania*

### Abstract

During 1928 - 1939, the Albanian King Zog I followed a pro- Italian policy. During the first years of monarchy, he managed the foreign policy of Albania, avoiding Yugoslavia. The improvement of the relationships between Italy and Albania reduced the relations with Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia thought during the time when King Zogu was in reign, that the foreign policy of Albania will be fully oriented towards Belgrade. But in continuing years, didn't result like that. In this sense, Yugoslavia was organizing a plot against him, during his visit in Vienna. King Zogu's opponents were also political immigrants that were residing in many European countries, mainly in Vienna, Paris, Athens, Rome etc. Many Albanian personalities like: Fan Noli. Hasan Prishtina, Bedri Pejani, Rexhep Mitrovica, were among King Zogu's rival figures.

**Keywords:** political emigration, plot in Vienna, attack, "National Union".

### Introduction

For the elimination of King Zog I, were interested Yugoslavia and the Albanian political immigrants. Many of the aforementioned personalities were his worst enemies. The information about the plot in Vienna was obtained by Sejfi Vllamasi, which in his memories, analyzes details of the attack against Zogu I in Vienna. He explains that Fuat Bej Dibra made a proposal to Vllamasi, providing 10.000 gold napoleons to eliminate Zogu (Vllamasi, 2000, 451). On the other side Vllamasi was made aware, that Fuat Dibra has informed Zogu for the plot that the immigrants in Vienna were planning against him and that they had proposed to Fuat Dibra 10.000 napoleons, to find someone to kill Zog. Sejfi Vllamasi and Angjelin Suma were two of the most important activists of the Albanian political migration in Austria. In January 1931, Zogu came in Vienna to be cured from a serious disease. This information was made known by a group of articles and foreign newspapers, also from the comments of Albanian consul in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> After the medical visit, which proved no serious disease for King Zogu I, the immigrants of Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia, asked their patriots in Vienna, the physical elimination of Zogu. In Vienna except the committee and members of the "National Union", other immigrants like: Hasan Prishtina, Nikoll Ivanaj, Dom Frano Karma, Azis Cami, Qazim Mulleti were residing. These were political fugitives that started to plan the physical elimination, because they were declared his enemies in exile.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> AMPJ (1934). Fondi 151. Doc.858, 5-11.

<sup>2</sup> AMPJ (1934). Fondi 151, Doc. 300.

## **Albanian political immigrants in Vienna and the plot of King Zog I**

King Zog I knew, that his arrival in Vienna, was dangerous, because of all Albanian political immigrants in Vienna. The Vienna police was aware of the danger caused by Albanian immigrants (Vllamasi, 2000, 452). They contacted the Albanian immigrants of "National Union" residing in Vienna and required from them not to take any action that will harm King Zog (Fischer, 1984, 195). Although the Albanian immigrants promised not to take any action against King Zog I, it didn't result so. In the following days the immigrants of "National Unity" were contacted via mail and telegram from the Albanian immigrants that lived in Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy to eliminate King Zog I.<sup>3</sup> Most of the Albanian immigrants insisted on eliminating King Zog, because he was seen as the enemy of Albania's interests. The Albanian immigrants of "National Union" were supported by Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup>

The assassination of King Zog I was very difficult, because he was surrounded by the police. The only opportunities for the plot were King Zog's visits to restaurants, theatre and opera. The organization needed more money to eliminate King Zog. They had around 70.000 lira that were ensured from the Albanian Bashkimi journal (Vllamasi, 2000, 454). The plot was implemented on the 21-st of February 1931, in front of the Vienna Vienna, where Llesh Topallaj was shot to death, while King Zog escaped unharmed. The attackers were arrested (Fischer, 1984, 198). They declared, they would murder the king, because he destroyed the Albanian people and has ravaged the country.<sup>5</sup> All the members of National Unity were sentenced, except Hasan Prishtina, who would find the death in 1933. After the plot against King Zog and after the capture of the attackers, the Viennese press wrote that the money for the assassination were ensured from Yugoslavia, and Dom Loro Caka was arrested, because he was appointed by Yugoslavia to organize the plot. This event was commented in the international arena, while Italy as Albania's ally, commented about Yugoslavia as the most interested party for the assassination of King Zog. Yugoslavia benefited from the economic situation, not only in Albania, but also in the ranks of Albanians immigration, to take revenge on King Zog. Austrian police also commented that the Albanian immigrants were paid from the Yugoslav government. In conjunction with the plot Fischer (1984) analyzes that Yugoslavia was directly implicated, prepared the location and helped financially a military group of Albanian people that lived in Yugoslavia, to pass the Albanian border after the news of the murder of King Zog. This group would interfere in Albania, to overthrow the Albanian government, after the news of the plot of King Zog. Gani Kryeziu, in cooperation with Kol Bib Miraka, Maxhun Nimani, Sadik Rustemi, Arif Rada and Taf Pece prepared the plan for an uprising inside Albania (Haklaj, 2002, 25).

### **The attitude of Italy and Yugoslavia about the plot of King Zog in Vienna**

The Foreign Affairs Ministry of Austria was convinced that the payment for the plot

<sup>3</sup> AMPJ (1934). Fondi 151, Doc. 300, 5.

<sup>4</sup> AMPJ (1934). Fondi 151, Doc. 300, 151.

<sup>5</sup> AMPJ (1934). Fondi 151, Doc. 300, 5.

was undertaken by the Belgrade Government. Albania and Italy were of the same opinion. This hypothesis became more reliable, when a large numbers of Albanian immigrants were standing near the Albanian border, waiting to attack Albania after the news of the plot of Zogu. The press, but also Italian circles accused Belgrade's government as the cause of the events that occurred recently in Albania. Fischer (1984) analyzed that: "Yugoslavia had acted in a suspicious way, if the king would have been killed; the Yugoslav military group would have overcome the border and would enter Albania, in the morning." The Belgrade government denied the organization of the plot.

### Conclusions

Relating the attackers, the court decision was due on the 2-nd of October 1931 in Vienna, which sentenced Ndok Gjeshi with 7 years imprisonment and Azis Cami with 3 years imprisonment. Regarding Hasan Prishtina, the enemy of King Zogu, he left Austria towards Italy. After the failure of the plot, he would prepare another plan for the execution of King Zog. The last efforts of Hasan Prishtina failed, because, he died in 1933 in Thessaloniki (Greece). Another trial was organized in Tirana for the members of the committee "National Unity", who were sentenced in their absence. Despite efforts by the Yugoslav government to annihilate King Zog, they didn't succeed. He remained in power until 1939.

### References

- AMPJ (1934). Fondi 151, Doc. 300, 5.  
AMPJ (1930). Fondi 151, Doc. 300, 333.  
AMPJ (1931). Fondi 151, Doc. 300, 15.  
Dervishi, K. (2006). *Historia e shtetit shqiptar 1912- 2000*, Tirana.  
Fischer, B. (1984). *Mbreti Zog dhe përpjekja për stabilitet në Shqipëri*, Tirana.  
Haklaj, A., Veli, T. (2002). *Siguria kombetare në Shqipëri 1925- 1939*, Tirana, Geer.  
Selmani, H. (2008). *Nga notimet e Zogut I, mbret i shqiptarëve*, Tirana.  
Vllamasi, S. (2000). *Ballafaqime politike në Shqipëri 1849- 1942*, Tirana.