

## Albanian political expatriates in the late 1920s and early 1930s of the XX century

PhD (C.) Antoneta Hoxha  
University of Tirana, Albania

### Abstract

At the end of the 1920s, the Albanian political expatriates in the diaspora intensified their activity. This study aims to analyze the activity of the anti-Zogist groups in exile, such as: National Revolutionary Committee (KONARE), National Liberation Committee (KÇN), National Union, Zara Group, etc., the positions of these groups towards the Italian policies in Albania, criticizing not only the regime and its intentions, but also the alliance with Italy. On the other hand, there were a few segments of political émigrés that were funded by Italy, being used as pressure on Ahmet Zogu, the President of the Albanian state, if he were to deviate from the policies pursued towards the neighboring country across the Adriatic.

The Albanian opposition in exile could not be united around a single political program. It comprised representatives of different currents of political thoughts as well as different social strata. However, although divided into groups and different countries, they were a real opposition to Zog. The political expatriates were the regime's strongest opponents not only during the republic days, but their activity intensified with the spread of news of the change of the regime to monarchy. Besides the countries where they lived, their activity had its impact within Albania as well. In fact, in opposing Zogist policies, they came up with concrete actions that seriously threatened the life of the king. Also, the relations of the governments of the neighboring countries with the Albanian monarchist regime were influenced by the behavior towards Zog political opponents, who took refuge in Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, and in other countries, in Europe and overseas.

**Keywords:** political immigration, agreement, politics, foreign relations.

### Introduction

Following the arrival of Ahmet Zog as Head of the Albanian state in December 1924 and proclamation of the Republic of Albania in January 1925, where he took the position of the President, the political opponents who until then were in power left the country. They first settled in Brindisi and Bari, Italy, and then moved to other countries. There was no opposition after Zog's return to Albania with the help of Yugoslavia. In circumstances when the opposition was in immigration, the political struggle took place remotely.<sup>1</sup>

Zog's opponents and other representatives of political immigration formed an organization called the National Revolutionary Committee (KONARE), whose leader was elected Fan Noli, head of the Albanian opposition at the time.<sup>2</sup> Its program did not differ much from Noli's government one in 1924, and contained the following main points: the removal of Zog and his collaborators; the establishment of the republican

<sup>1</sup> Paskal Milo, *Politika e Jashtme e Shqipërisë (1912-1939)*, Tirana: Toena, 2013, page (*herianfter*: p.) 805.

<sup>2</sup> Nasho Jorgaqi, *Jeta e Fan S. Nolit II*, Tirana: Ombra GVG, 2005, p. 25.

regime; the conduct of an agrarian reform; reclaim of ethnic boundaries.<sup>3</sup> In July 1925, KONARE began publishing in Geneva, Switzerland the newspaper “*Liria Kombëtare*” [National Freedom], through which it revealed its socio-political views.<sup>4</sup>

KONARE aimed at removing Zog from the Albanian politics, and challenged the policy followed by Italy in Albania and Balkans with the well-known slogan “The Balkans belong to the Balkan people”. It was a democratic, left-wing but not communist organization, supported by the Balkan Communist Federation and other left-wing organizations in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Given that it had a leftist inclination and close to Comintern (Communist International organization), some members left it, creating other opposition groups in exile.<sup>6</sup>

In 1927, KONARE changed its name to National Liberation Committee (KÇN), which included in its program the national liberation of Albania. The Kosovo Liberation Committee joined also the KÇN, and on April 24 they issued a joint statement setting out the fighting strategy of both organizations.<sup>7</sup>

The KÇN was an ardent opponent of Tirana pacts concluded in 1926 and 1927 between Italy and Albania. To this aim, they sent a note of protest to the League of Nations, which was published on January 15, 1928 in an article in the Italian paper “*La Libertà*”, published in Paris. “We strongly protest against the November 22 Pact between Italy and the Albanian feudal regime that puts an end to the independence of Albania, a member of the League of Nations, and it is a risk for new wars in the Balkans and Europe. The current Albanian regime is not the expression of the will of the people, whose true representatives have been murdered or imprisoned or forced to go abroad to save their lives. On behalf of the Albanian people we serve and considering that peace is threatened, we declare that we do not recognize the above-mentioned treaty and we plead to not register it as it is against the letter and the spirit of the League of Nations”, it was written inter alia in the protest note of the Albanian opposition (as described in the article), addressed to the League of Nations by the “National Liberation” Albanian Committee after the conclusion of the Second Treaty of Tirana. This telegram was dated December 21, 1927, and was signed by Fan Noli and Bedri Pejani on behalf of the Albanian National Liberation Committee.<sup>8</sup>

A similar telegram was sent to Rome to Benito Mussolini. The text of the telegram was as follows: “The November 22 pact that you concluded with the Albanian feudal regime puts an end to the independence of our country. On behalf of the Albanian people we serve, we declare that we do not recognize the above-mentioned treaty”. This telegram contained also Noli’s and Pejani’s signatures.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, the members that left KONARE created in September 1925 another organization called “National Union”. The latter established its branches in Austria,

<sup>3</sup> Valentina Duka, *Histori e Shqipërisë 1912-2000*, Tirana: SHBLU, 2007, p. 170.

<sup>4</sup> Viron Koka, *Rymat e mendimit politik-shoqëror në Shqipëri në vitet '30 të shekullit XX*, Tirana: History Institute, 1985, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, volume III, Tirana: Toena, 2007, p. 278.

<sup>6</sup> Arben Puto, *Shqipëria politike 1912-1939*, Tirana: Toena, 2009, p. 427.

<sup>7</sup> N. Jorgaqi, *Jeta e Fan S.Nolit...*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup> *Archive of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania (herianfter: AMEFA)*, Year (Y.) 1928, File (F.) 113, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*.

Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, France, etc. Since they could not exercise their political activity freely in Italy, the center of this organization was located in Vienna, where it established its Central Committee composed of Xhemal Bushati, Angjelin Suma and Ali Këlcyra. The newspaper "*Bashkimi Kombëtar*" was a part of this organization, financially supported by Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup>

Initially, the "National Union" members settled in Italy, where they hoped for assistance and support from this country.<sup>11</sup> Ali Këlcyra had illusions at first of assistance from Italy, keeping in touch with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Palazzo Chiggi*, on behalf of the "National Union". But Rome made it clear that it held its position of relationship with Zog. Consequently, this group sought another alternative, leaning more towards the Franco-Yugoslav bloc to develop its activity. Through its paper, "*Bashkimi*", it denounced the two Tirana Pacts of 1926 and 1927, which marked its separation from Italy.<sup>12</sup>

Another group created in 1927 in immigration, was the "Zara Group", who were stationed in Italy. It included Mustafa Kruja, Loro Cakaj, Lazër Shantoja etc. This group was supported by Italy.<sup>13</sup> The members of this group were left free in their activity, being used as a means of pressure against Zog.<sup>14</sup> This group was also called the "Independent Group of Albanian Refugees", which published in Vienna the newspaper "*Ora e Shqipnisë*" [The Hour of Albania] led by Lazër Shantoja. Having pro-Italian tendencies, on the occasion of the conclusion of Pact I of Tirana, Mustafa Kruja sent Mussolini a greeting telegram. According to the secret discussions, the Italians had promised him that if Zog suffered anything, Mustafa Kruja would be appointed head of the Albanian government.<sup>15</sup>

The situation created after the proclamation of the Albanian Monarchy in 1928, was reflected in the ranks of the Albanian diaspora, which was spread to almost all Balkan countries, in various cities in Europe, USA, Australia, etc. The change of the regime was welcomed with optimism in certain circles, and in others not so kindly. While organizations of national, religious, cultural character, etc., expressed in their programs demands of non-political type, the anti-Zogist political groups in exile such as the National Liberation Committee (KÇN), National Union, League of Emigrants in Yugoslavia and other smaller groups opposed the proclamation of the monarchy up to the League of Nations and their programs voiced its downfall.<sup>16</sup>

Fan Noli was amongst the first opposition personalities abroad to rise up against the change of the regime. He called the proclamation of the monarchy "a royal farce that was conceived in Rome and staged in Tirana", writing inter alia that, "... this monarchical operetta is played in Europe in the middle of the XX century, a century that has seen the overthrow of centuries-old thrones and dynasties...".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Kastriot Dervishi, *Historia e shtetit shqiptar 1912-2005*, Tirana: "55", 2006, p. 317.

<sup>11</sup> P. Milo, *Politika e jashtme...*, p. 802-803.

<sup>12</sup> A. Puto, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 433.

<sup>13</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 280-281.

<sup>14</sup> Mustafa Merlika-Kruja, *Gjysmë shekulli me pendë në dorë*, Tirana: OMSCA-1, 2015, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> *Historia e popullit...*, vol. III, p. 281.

<sup>16</sup> Fatmira Rama, "Aspekte të luftës politike në diasporë në vitet e Monarkisë", në: *Monarkia Shqiptare 1928-1939*, Tirana: Toena, 2011, p. 251-252.

<sup>17</sup> Fan S. Noli, *Publicistika (1925-1949)*, Tirana: Academy of Sciences of the SPR of Albania, 1988, p. 53-56.

The Albanians settled in the Austrian capital, apparently from the Catholic elements in emigration, simultaneously Noli supporters, made their statement against the new regime. In the bulletin dated October 19, 1928, the French provisional newspaper "*Revue de Balkans*", declared an announcement of Vienna expatriates, where they declared that they did not recognize the "new situation". According to the same sources, Fan Noli and Rexhep Shala had filed their protests up to the League of Nations.<sup>18</sup>

Noli was the author of a long series of articles in various newspapers published in Europe, such as: "*Liria Kombëtare*", Geneva; "*Federation Balkanique*", Vienna; "*Le Cri des Peuples*", Paris, etc. He condemned through them the establishment of the monarchy and the policy pursued by Italy in Albania. Following the harsh criticism of the proclamation of King Zog, KÇN published constantly editorials in the "*Liria Kombëtare*" newspaper, where it insisted that the government system in Albania should not be changed. It criticized also the ways used by the government authorities to "change the regime and crown Zog". The newspaper "*Liria Kombëtare*" underlined on September 1, 1928 that "The second voters and the honorable of the country were called at night by gendarmes in gendarmerie quarters, and were forced to sign telegraphic manifestos without enquiring into their wishes at all". These manifestations and rallies organized by the authorities of the capital were labeled as having the "color of funeral ceremonies".<sup>19</sup>

The criticism against the proclamation of the new regime and the intentions of the Italian policy towards Albania and Balkans continued in the following months. Thus, in December 1928, another article in the pages of "*Liria Kombëtare*" newspaper underlined that the "Italian imperialism" and Mussolini aimed at the conquest of Albania, Yugoslavia and the entire Balkans. As for Zog's title, "King of the Albanians", this article noted that "he could only lie the naïve".<sup>20</sup>

In addition to articles published at "*Liria Kombëtare*", the expatriates of this group published protesting notes in other foreign newspapers as well, such as at the Vienna socialist newspaper "*Illustriertes Extrablatt*", against the monarchical regime, and against the Italian politics in Albania.<sup>21</sup> Also, the KÇN and Kosovo Committee members published several articles at "*La Federation Balkanique*", which was published regularly twice a month in all Balkan languages.<sup>22</sup>

The KÇN carried out its political activity against the regime and the alliance with Italy mainly through the press, where it expressed its political views, published the program of the organization, noteprotests, statements and appeals to the people. In this context, on the occasion of the Independence Day of Albania, in November 1930, through a statement of the Central Committee, KÇN accused the Albanian political class of giving the country to the "fascist imperialism".<sup>23</sup> The statement stressed that

<sup>18</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1928, F. 65, p. 348.

<sup>19</sup> "News from Albania", *Liria Kombëtare*, no. 90, Geneva, 1 September 1928, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Fatmira Rama, "Kosovo Committee in cooperation with other political organizations (1925-1939)", në: "*Komiteti Mbrojtja Kombëtare e Kosovës*", Tirana: Albanian Sciences Academy, 2004, p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1928, F. 29, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1929, F. 578, p. 131.

<sup>23</sup> *Central State Archive of the Republic of Albania (hereinafter: CSA)*, Fund (F.) 447 (Collection of parties, organizations), Y. 1930, File (F.) 35, p. 1.

Albania had become an Italian colony in the Balkans and that the entire economy, administration, army, youth and culture organizations were in the hands of the Italians, who according to it were “official Rome agents”.<sup>24</sup>

The Central Committee of the KÇN, on its part, made calls to the Albanian people to rise in a “revolution” to overthrow the Zogist regime. In this context, in the declaration dated November 28, 1930, the Central Committee announced a program, which, according to them, would save the people and “would tear Albania from the nails of Italian imperialism”. This program consisted of the following main points: annulment of “colonization” treaties; nationalization of the National Bank and all concessions provided to the Italian capitalists; expulsion of fascist organizers; transfer of land from *bey*s to farmers and peasants; pardoning of debt and provision of loans to farmers, peasants and workers; guarantee of freedom of speech, press, organization, strikes, etc..<sup>25</sup> Despite the calls for revolution and a seemingly ambitious program, they remained merely at a declarative level as this group did not take any concrete action to overthrow the monarchic regime.

There were opponents of the rise of Ahmet Zogu to the Albanian throne and the relations he had established with Italy also in the ranks of political expatriates living in Paris. In a long protest manifest, published in the French paper “*Le Temps*”, the king was described as a person who did not have any of the intellectual and moral qualities necessary for a head of state, and moreover, now that “he was in the service of the Fascist Italy”.<sup>26</sup>

Another organization of Albanian political émigrés, opponents of the Zogist regime and Italian politics, was the “National Union”, whose members had expanded their activities to various European countries and were financially supported by Yugoslavia.<sup>27</sup>

Ali Këlcyra, one of the most prominent activists of the National Union, on behalf of the organization, had maintained constant contacts with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs hoping for the support of the latter. But, after the conclusion of Tirana Pacts, and the strengthening of the Italian position in Albania, and after the support that Rome provided to Zog, this group cooperated with the Franco-Yugoslav bloc.<sup>28</sup> In addition to being financially supported by Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav legation in Vienna became the center of coordination between this organization and Belgrade. Thus, its most prominent activists such as Ali Këlcyra, Sejfi Vllamasi and others visited occasionally the Yugoslav state.<sup>29</sup>

Having always been active as Zog opponents, the “National Union” members stated their political convictions also mainly through the press. They were published in various editorials, but the organ of the organization “National Union” was the newspaper bearing the same name.<sup>30</sup> Through articles against Zog’s rule and Italian politics in Albania, this political group increased the sensitivity of Albanian and

<sup>24</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>25</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>26</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1928, F. 65, p. 239.

<sup>27</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1929, F. 569, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> A. Puto, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 433.

<sup>29</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1929, F. 569, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1929, F. 29, p. 17.

foreign public opinion.

On the eve of the proclamation of the monarchy, the “National Union” organization drafted a draft call that was published on July 27, 1928, in the “*Bashkimi Kombëtar*” newspaper. Këlcyra opposed the proclamation of the monarchy and the “risk of colonization of the country”, justifying the illegitimacy of this act by the lack from Prince Vid of legally renouncement of the citizenship or throne.<sup>31</sup> But, as seen later, all these attempts failed.

Also, in order to oppose the new regime, Ali Këlcyra, on behalf of the “National Union”, addressed memoranda to the “League of Nations” and to the Great Powers. On October 12, 1928, the Paris newspaper “*Le Temps*” reported on a protest note of the National Union addressed to the League of Nations, the object of which was the opposition to the establishment of the monarchy. This document alleged that Zog, in exchange for the Italian assistance to obtain the throne, had promised favors which would “financially enslave” and turn Albania into an Italian colony. Këlcyra met also well-known figures of European politics, but to no avail.<sup>32</sup>

The “National Union” organization tried to secure support from elements against the regime within Albania. The reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania stated a possible organization of this organization against Zog. This was more of a wish which was not based on reality. The movements of political expatriates were supervised by the agents of the state stationed in Europe and Balkans. The National Union, however, was an opposition in exile, whose activity kept Zog under tension.<sup>33</sup> There were other groups of political immigrants who had the support of Greece and Yugoslavia who also acted against Zog’s government. Amongst them, it could be mentioned Koço Tasi and his group, which was based in Athens. Tasi was a pro-Greek who supported Greek policy in the 1920s and 1930s against Albania. He described the Zogist monarchy as a “Muslim regime” and called for its overthrow.<sup>34</sup>

Yugoslavia supported also politically and financially Gani Kryeziu, a sworn enemy of Zog, who accused the latter of murdering his brother, Ceno Bey Kryeziu. The latter settled in Gjakova together with other anti-Zogist elements. Although Kryeziu and his men constantly attacked the border and organized assassinations of Italian officers, they did not pose a real threat to the royal power. Belgrade tried to unite in a single group “National Union”, Gani Kryeziu and other anti-Zogist elements.<sup>35</sup>

Since 1929, Zog had begun to show dissatisfaction with the significant increase of Italian influence and the failure of timely provision of SVEA loan installments. Meanwhile, Italy, in order to put pressure on the Albanian king, subsidized his political opponents in exile.<sup>36</sup> Zog was informed of the support provided to his adversaries by the government of Rome. What worried the king was that the Italian pressure was intentional to show Zog that Italy could change its policy by replacing him. For the Italian minister, Sola, these suspicions caused the Albanian monarch to

<sup>31</sup> Tanush Frashëri, *Ali Këlcyra, aristokrati kuq e zi*, Tiranë: Çabej, 2005, p. 109.

<sup>32</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1928, F. 95, p. 24; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 280.

<sup>33</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1928, F. 29, p. 124; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 280.

<sup>34</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1929, F. 578, p. 51-64; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 281.

<sup>35</sup> CSA, F. 149, Y. 1929, F.1003, p. 9; P. Milo, *Politika e jashtme...*, p. 803.

<sup>36</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 306.

distance himself “by slowing down a lot the road leading to Rome”.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the 1920s, Vienna was the main center of anti-Zogist groups in exile, such as the KÇN, “National Union”, etc.<sup>38</sup> But, as it will be shown below, this changed in 1929, where elements of these groups were found in Italy, proving not only Rome’s political pressure on Zog, but also some kind of dissatisfaction between the parties.

In July 1929, sources of the Albanian consulate in Bari indicated that the Albanian political expatriates settled in Italy, in addition to being funded by it, entered and left Italy freely, while, it was known that such movements could not be made without the authorization of the local authorities. This consulate ruled out the possibility of the refugees being subsidized by another state, as their correspondence was always under strict control. The Albanian Consul General in Bari, Mark Kodheli, informed that the Italian government was justified by the fact that it had agreed with the Albanian government to allow the Albanian refugees to live in Italy, so that they would not become a means of any third country. But, according to Kodheli, the immigrants settled in Italy carried out freely their “propaganda”.<sup>39</sup>

The same sources inform that not all expatriates settled in Italy were supporters of its policy, such as Bahri Omari and Shefqet Korça. Despite this fact, these too were supported by the Italian government.<sup>40</sup> Other political immigrants settled in Italy were also Sheh Karbonara, Lek Margjini, Beqir Velo, Kostë Paftali, Ibraim Dede, Kol Shiroka, Xhemal Kondi, Stavro Vinjauetç.<sup>41</sup> The activity and propaganda of the refugees in Italy was limited and depended directly on the “loyalty” that the Albanian government would pursue towards its “friend”, Italy.

Commenting on the current situation in Albania, in an interview for “*Ethnos*”, the Athens newspaper, Ali Këlcyra stressed that the situation in Albania was presented as an “abnormal international situation”, which “was only theoretically independent”. He underlined that “this is a regime that was imposed and conserved by the constant threat of Italy”, that Ahmet Zog was imposed against the will of the people, “who is dissatisfied with the economic penetration of foreigners”, “a penetration that day by day becomes most dangerous for its independence”.<sup>42</sup>

Based on the above data, Zog could not remain indifferent to the activity of Albanian political expatriates. They were a potential danger to his power and life. Thus, the king took several protective measures, including assassination attempts for the physical elimination of his enemies, such as those against Ali Këlcyra, Shefqet Korça, Koço Tasi, etc.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, another measure taken by Zog to limit the activity of his political

<sup>37</sup> *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (hereinafter: DDI)*, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Settima serie: 1922-1935, Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1970, Volume (Vol.) VII, 24 settembre 1928 – 12 settembre 1929, document number (doc. no.) 476, “Mussolini’s telegram to Sola, June 7, 1929”, p. 467-468; A. Puto, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 486.

<sup>38</sup> *AMEFA*, Y. 1928, F. 29, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> *AMEFA*, Y. 1929, F. 578, p. 43-44.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*, p. 48.

<sup>42</sup> *AMEFA*, Y. 1930, F. 138, p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> Ali Këlcyra, *Shkrime për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Tirana: Onufri, 2012, p. 136; A. Puto, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 435.

opponents was the censorship of the opposition press. The Ministry of Inner Affairs instructed a thorough inspection of the published newspapers, which, if they contained articles or notes against the state, would be banned from publishing "harmful bulletins and a copy be sent to the ministry".<sup>44</sup> Also, the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered all prefectures of the country to stop in Albania the circulation of papers published by the political émigrés, such as "*Liria Kombëtare*" of Geneva, "*Republika*" of Boston, etc. It was ordered that "*Liria Kombëtare*" newspaper, which came in the form of packages or envelopes, addressed to certain persons and foreign representations in Albania, be burned without being distributed.<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, Zog, apart from the sentences in absentia, made also efforts for peace with the opposition in exile through the governmental members. One such attempt was the call made to Sejfi Vllamasi in 1931, that if he returned to his homeland "he would be placed in an important position". A call and reconciliation between the parties was made by "Vatra" association, whose representatives met to this purpose the members of the "National Union". However, all these efforts did not provide any result.<sup>46</sup>

Since the beginning of 1931, there were rumors both at home and abroad, that began to circulate in the press and not only that Zog was facing serious health issues. Although these news were refuted by the press office and some pro-government newspapers such as "*Dielli*", "*Vullneti*", etc., they were true. On January 25, 1931, Zog traveled to Vienna for a more specialized medical visit.<sup>47</sup>

The news on the deterioration of the king's health delighted his political opponents at home and abroad. Zog's trip to Vienna set into motion the anti-Zogist elements in this city.<sup>48</sup>

The Prime Minister Pandeli Evangjeli and the Italian Minister in Tirana, Soranja, warned Zog about the plan of a potential assassination attempt against him. For this reason, they advised him to not leave for Vienna. The Foreign Ministry was also informed by Yugoslav sources about an assassination attempt being prepared against the king. Therefore, the MFA instructed the Albanian consulate in Vienna to take serious measures during Zog's visit. However, King Zog himself underestimated these warnings.<sup>49</sup> On the evening of February 20, 1931, when he was leaving the hall of the Opera House in Vienna, Zog was shot by the fugitives Azis Çami and Ndok Gjeloshi, the organizers of the attempt were members of the "National Union".<sup>50</sup>

While Zog was in Vienna, the Italians tried to take advantage of his absence to study the current situation in Albania. This would provide them an opportunity to be

<sup>44</sup> CSA, F. 346, Y. 1931, F. 40, p. 2-14.

<sup>45</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>46</sup> Novruz Zejanti, *Ahmet Zogu politikan apo ushtarak?*, Tirana: Globus R., 2005, p. 254-255; A. Puto, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 435-437.

<sup>47</sup> "King Zog's illness is officially denied", *Dielli*, no. 5131(924), Boston, 10 December 1929, p. 1; "On the biased Vienna news", *Vullneti*, no. 18, Tirana, 10 January 1930, p. 2; Bernd J. Fischer, *Mbreti Zog dhe për-pjekja për stabilitet në Shqipëri*, Tirana: Çabej, 2004, p. 196.

<sup>48</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1929, F. 578, p. 43; A. Puto, *Shqipëria Politike...*, p. 490.

<sup>49</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 21, *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 307; P. Milo, *Politika e jashtme...*, p. 809.

<sup>50</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 95; K. Dervishi, *Historia e shtetit...*, p. 137; *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 307.

prepared for any eventuality. To this aim, Grandi instructed Soranja to monitor the situation and pay attention to it as if they were in a deep crisis. Furthermore, Grandi, the Italian foreign minister, instructed Soranja and Pariani to engage in gathering daily political information abroad, to follow the prefects closely, to contact directly the Interior Minister, to maintain contacts with the tribal chiefs, to instill confidence in people, etc.<sup>51</sup>

After the Vienna assassination attempt, there were numerous articles that flooded the newspapers of different countries of the world, such as: "Morning Post", "Daily Express", "Evening Standard", "Daily Telegraph", "Daily Herald", "Manchester Guardian", "Neue Freie Presse", "New York Herald", etc.<sup>52</sup> The Roma press believed that, after the assassination attempt of King Zog by the political fugitives, "the secret powers behind these riots would be directed against Italy." For the "Morning Post", the death of King Zog, would have caused worse reactions, as according to the Second Pact of Tirana, the Italian government was obliged for a period of 20 years to ensure the integrity and independence of Albania, intervening with military forces and financial means, in case of any war or any threat that could be made to Albania. It emphasized that "In this way, any serious revolution in Albania would justify the intervention of Italy, a step that would cause the immediate mobilization of Yugoslavia".<sup>53</sup>

The above events provoked the reaction of Italy, denouncing Belgrade's involvement in them. Rome did not file any official protests to Belgrade, but the press and its representatives accused the Yugoslav government and its diplomatic missions their inciting.<sup>54</sup> The stagnant situation created between Italy and Yugoslavia was also reflected in the European press. The Romanian newspaper "Dimineata", in an editorial dated February 17, 1931, wrote that it was said in political circles that after the assassination attempt of Vienna against the Albanian king, a tension developed between Italy and Yugoslavia, after it was affirmed that the assassins were people paid from Serbia, and their goal was to eliminate the king, who was a partisan of politics closer to Italy".<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the Vienna court sentenced Ndok Gjeloši to seven years and Aziz Çami to three years imprisonment.<sup>56</sup> During the investigation proceedings for the event, there were facts emerged that proved that it was organized by the "National Union" members, with the knowledge and funding of the Yugoslav government.<sup>57</sup> Zogu, in an interview to the Viennese press, alleged to the role of Yugoslavia in organizing gangs, obstacles to the consolidation of Albania and endangerment of the peace in the region.<sup>58</sup> In fact, in diplomatic optics, these statements may be described as hasty.

<sup>51</sup> DDI, Settima serie, Vol. X, doc. no. 41, "Telegram of Grandi to the minister in Tirana, Soragna, on January 28, 1931", p. 61-62.

<sup>52</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 22.

<sup>53</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 170.

<sup>54</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 260; A. Puto, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 493.

<sup>55</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 260.

<sup>56</sup> CSA, F. 199, Y. 1931, F. 2, p. 185; "Assassinations of international importance", *Ora*, no. 307, Tirana, 24 February 1931, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Sejfi Vllamasi, *Ballafaqime politike në Shqipëri 1897-1942*, Tirana: Neraida, 2000, p. 314; P. Milo, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 810.

<sup>58</sup> B. J. Fischer, *Mbreti Zog dhe përpjekja...*, p. 201.

However, the Yugoslav government denied the allegations against it, in support of the assassination attempt, even though Gani Kryeziu's armed forces and other fugitives had fled to Yugoslavia on the Albanian-Yugoslav border. The Yugoslav Minister in Tirana, Nastasijevic, ruled out the involvement of his government, adding that "Yugoslavia has no interest in taking careless actions that could trigger a war".<sup>59</sup> With regard to the organization of the Vienna assassination attempt, there were suspicions on KÇN members, but "*Liria Kombëtare*" denied the charge.<sup>60</sup>

The way the event unfolded and its analysis that followed it indicate that this act was not simply an expression of internal dissatisfaction with Zog, but a well-thought-out plan to overthrow the regime from Yugoslavia. According to the scholar Arben Puto, after Zog's assassination, prepared armed gangs would enter Albania through the Albanian-Yugoslav border. This is evidenced by the fact that the Albanian expatriates settled in Yugoslavia were stationed near the border ready to intervene after the assassination of the king. They were led by Gani Kryeziu, a sworn enemy of Zog, who had constantly plotted to overthrow him.<sup>61</sup>

Belgrade, through this assassination, aimed to cause unrest in Albania and, on the other hand, to take advantage of it, bringing to power people it considered its own thus avoiding the Italian control of Albania, which it considered dangerous to it. In this context, on February 24, 1931, the "*Morning Post*" wrote that, "... according to Tirana reports, the assassination attempt on King Zog's life was organized with the help of Yugoslavia by Ganibey, Cenobey's brother, killed three years ago in Prague". According to the article, after the death of the king, Albanian insurgents, equipped in Yugoslavia, would enter Albania in three regions and cause a revolution, and that, "Gjeloshi and Çami, who were the perpetrators of the assassination attempt on Friday night, were in close agreement with Yugoslav circles".<sup>62</sup>

The assassination attempt in Vienna had also a negative effect on the Italian-Albanian relations. This event showed that if Italy were to further increase its influence in Albania, it could cost Zog's life and power. This assassination attempt was a signal that the Albanian political émigrés, as well as political circles at home, would not remain indifferent if he continued to turn Albania into an Italian protectorate.<sup>63</sup>

After being banished by the Austrian authorities following the Vienna assassination attempt, a large part of the Albanian political expatriates settled in Paris. This city became the new headquarters of the "National Union". Upon their initiative, expatriates of different currents made efforts to organize a joint congress. This activity was also supported by the well-known French politician Justin Godard. This initiative was unsuccessful as many representatives of political groups did not respond to the invitation. Following these events, the political activity of the "National Union" decreased constantly.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, Noli settled in the United States in 1930, but he continued to state

<sup>59</sup> CSA, F. 163 (Italian Legation), Y. 1931, F. 46, p. 14; CSA, F. 154 (Gendarmerie Command), Y. 1931, F. 71, p. 2; P. Milo, *Shqipëria politike...*, p. 810.

<sup>60</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 308.

<sup>61</sup> A. Puto, *Shqipëria Politike...*, p. 493.

<sup>62</sup> AMEFA, Y. 1931, F. 48, p. 174.

<sup>63</sup> *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar...*, vol. III, p. 309.

<sup>64</sup> P. Milo, *Politika e jashme...*, p. 810-811; K. Dervishi, *Historia e shtetit...*, p. 317.

his political ideas “against the Albanian government and its policy towards Italy”.<sup>65</sup> However, Noli did not pose a threat to Zog’s regime or Italian-Albanian relations. The Albanian opposition in exile could not unite around a single political program. It was composed of representatives of different currents of political thoughts as well as different social strata. However, although divided into groups and different countries, they were a real opposition to Zog. The political émigrés were the regime’s strongest opponents not only during the republic, but their activity intensified with the spread of news of the change of the regime to monarchy. Their activity, in addition to the countries where they lived, had its impact at home as well. In fact, in challenging the Zogist policies they came up with concrete actions that seriously threatened the life of the king. Also, the relations of the governments of the neighboring countries with the Albanian monarchist regime were influenced by the behavior towards the Zog political opponents, who took refuge in Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, and in other countries, in Europe and overseas. This issue was especially sensitive in the Albanian-Italian and Albanian-Yugoslav relations. Their improvement and deterioration was often caused by the way in which the various groups of Albanian political expatriates in these countries were treated, which were generally established after the return of Ahmet Zog to power in December 1924.

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