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## **ALBANIA DURING THE YEARS 1939-1944. ACCORDING TO POLISH DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS**

**Abstract:** *On April 7, 1939, Italy's invasion of Albania marked a significant escalation in Benito Mussolini's imperialist aspirations. This invasion, driven by Mussolini's expansionist policies, swiftly resulted in the conquest of Albania. The country's strategic importance to Italy had long been recognized, making it a target for Italian territorial ambitions. The invasion precipitated the rapid departure of King Ahmet Zogu from Albania, as Italian forces quickly established control over the country. This event underscored Albania's vulnerability to external powers and its susceptibility to being manipulated for geopolitical gains.*

*In this study, I aim to provide insights into the events surrounding Albania's occupation during World War II, drawing from Polish documents of the time. Polish diplomats and ambassadors were extensively informed about the situation in Albania and were able to offer objective perspectives, often emphasizing Poland's lack of political interest in the region. Additionally, the analysis incorporates data obtained from popular Polish newspapers of the era, which published articles and featured numerous photographs, providing valuable context to understand the political dynamics in Albania during this period.*

*The role of the Polish ambassador in Rome, Wieniawa Długoszewski, was pivotal in informing Italy's connections about the invasion of Albania. Through diplomatic channels, Długoszewski facilitated communication regarding the unfolding events in Albania, contributing to a better understanding of the situation among allied nations.*

*Following Italy's occupation of Albania, King Ahmet Zogu sought refuge in various countries, including a visit to Warsaw in July 1939. This visit, documented through studies and photographs from the time, sheds light on the diplomatic efforts and interactions between Albania and its allies during this tumultuous period. Additionally, key documents such as Ahmet Zog's letter to Władysław Sikorski, the Polish Prime Minister in London, and Antoni Balinski's correspondence regarding Britain's stance towards Zogu provide valuable insights into the diplomatic maneuvers undertaken by Albania and its allies.*

*Despite efforts to gather comprehensive information, certain gaps remain, such as the absence of a report from a Polish officer who was part of the British mission in Albania. This underscores the challenges in fully understanding Albania's situation post-Italian occupation and during Nazi Germany's subsequent annexation.*

*The impact of World War II on Albania was profound, leading to significant political, social, and economic upheavals. The invasion by Italy and subsequent occupation, followed by Nazi Germany's annexation, plunged Albania into a period of turmoil and conflict. The partisan warfare that ensued, led by communist factions under the direction of Enver Hoxha, further intensified the country's struggles.*

*The aftermath of the war left Albania fundamentally transformed, with the establishment of a communist regime led by Enver Hoxha, which endured for decades. The war's legacy left an indelible mark on Albania, shaping its governance, society, and economy for years to come.*

**Key words:** *Albania, Italy, diplomatic documents, Ahmet Zogu, war.*

**Methodology:** The drafting of this study was made possible thanks to the consultation of archival sources which are located in the Archive of New Acts in Warsaw and in the National Digital Archive in Warsaw, most of which have already been digitized. Also comparing articles from different newspapers of the time, where they are already digitized in: Digital Library of Silesia Region, Digital Library of Greater Poland, Digital Library of Krakow, Digital Library Polona, etc. But also based on the writings of eminent Polish authors for this period. The main reason for writing this study is that these documents are not treated and can be a modest contribution to Albanian historiography.

## ALBANIJA TOKOM 1939-1944. PREMA POLJSKIM DIPLOMATSKIM DOKUMENTIMA

**Apstrakt:** *Dana 7. aprila 1939, invazija Italije na Albaniju označila je značajnu eskalaciju imperijalističkih težnji Benita Musolinija. Ova invazija, vođena Musolinijevom ekspanzionističkom politikom, brzo je rezultirala osvajanjem Albanije. Strateški značaj zemlje za Italiju odavno je bio prepoznat, što ju je činilo metom italijanskih teritorijalnih ambicija. Invazija je ubrzala brzi odlazak kralja Ahmeta Zogua iz Albanije, pošto su italijanske snage brzo uspostavile kontrolu nad zemljom. Ovaj događaj je naglasio ranjivost Albanije na vanjske sile i njenu podložnost manipulisanju radi geopolitičkih koristi.*

*U ovoj studiji se želi pružiti uvid u događaje oko albanske okupacije tokom Drugog svjetskog rata, oslanjajući se na poljske dokumente tog vremena. Poljske diplomate i ambasadori su bili opširno informisani o situaciji u Albaniji i bili su u stanju da ponude objektivne perspektive, često naglašavajući nedostatak političkog interesa Poljske za region. Pored toga, analiza uključuje podatke dobijene iz popularnih poljskih novina tog doba, koje su objavljivale*

članke i sadržavale brojne fotografije, pružajući vrijedan kontekst za razumijevanje političke dinamike u Albaniji tokom ovog perioda.

Uloga poljskog ambasadora u Rimu Wieniawe Długoszewski bila je ključna u informisanju italijanskih veza o invaziji na Albaniju. Diplomatskim kanalima, Długoszewski je omogućio komunikaciju u vezi sa dešavanjima u Albaniji, doprinoseći boljem razumijevanju situacije među savezničkim nacijama.

Nakon italijanske okupacije Albanije, kralj Ahmet Zogu je tražio utočište u raznim zemljama, uključujući posjetu Varšavi u julu 1939. Ova posjeta, dokumentovana studijama i fotografijama iz tog vremena, baca svjetlo na diplomatske napore i interakcije između Albanije i njenih saveznika tokom ovog burnog perioda. Osim toga, ključni dokumenti poput pisma Ahmeta Zoga poljskom premijeru u Londonu Władysława Sikorskog i prepiske Antonija Balinskog u vezi sa stavom Britanije prema Zoguu pružaju vrijedan uvid u diplomatske manevre Albanije i njenih saveznika.

Uprkos naporima da se prikupe sveobuhvatne informacije, ostaju određene praznine, kao što je izostanak izvještaja poljskog oficira koji je bio dio britanske misije u Albaniji. Ovo naglašava izazove u potpunom razumijevanju situacije u Albaniji nakon italijanske okupacije i tokom naknadne aneksije nacističke Njemačke.

Utjecaj Drugog svjetskog rata na Albaniju bio je dubok i doveo je do značajnih političkih, društvenih i ekonomskih potresa. Invazija Italije i kasnija okupacija, praćena aneksijom nacističke Njemačke, gurnuli su Albaniju u period previranja i sukoba. Partizanski rat koji je uslijedio, vođen od strane komunističkih frakcija pod vodstvom Envera Hodže, dodatno je intenzivirao borbe u zemlji.

Posljedice rata ostavile su Albaniju suštinski transformisanu, uspostavljanjem komunističkog režima na čelu sa Enverom Hodžom, koji je trajao decenijama. Ratno naslijeđe ostavilo je neizbrisiv trag na Albaniju, oblikujući njenu upravu, društvo i ekonomiju u godinama koje dolaze.

**Ključne riječi:** Albanija, Italija, diplomatski dokumenti, Ahmet Zogu, rat.

**Metodologija:** Izrada ove studije je omogućena zahvaljujući konsultaciji arhivskih izvora koji se nalaze u Arhivu novih akata u Varšavi i u Nacionalnom digitalnom arhivu u Varšavi, od kojih je većina već digitalizovana. Takođe, poredеći članke iz različitih novina tog vremena, u kojima su već digitalizovani: Digitalna biblioteka Šleske regije, Digitalna biblioteka Velike Poljske, Digitalna biblioteka Krakova, Digitalna biblioteka Polona, itd, ali i na osnovu pisanja eminentnih poljskih autora za ovaj period. Glavni razlog za pisanje ove studije je taj što ovi dokumenti nisu obrađeni i mogu biti skroman doprinos albanskoj historiografiji.

## Italy's preparations for the invasion of Albania

On April 4, 1939, the Polish ambassador in Rome, Wieniawa Długoszowski, sends a telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw, as well as to the Polish ambassadors in London and Belgrade, a report on Italy's preparations for the invasion of Albania. In this document, among other things, he wrote: *The local Foreign Ministry confirmed the fact that Italy had joined the implementation of the plans for Albania, which, however, were not specified, it was only explained that the intervention was taking place at the „request of King Zog regarding the danger that threatens Albania”, and that the invasion of this country had not yet been decided.*<sup>1</sup>

The fact of strengthening, just in case, some strategic points on the borders with Yugoslavia and on the Adriatic coast, as well as the movements of naval units, confirmed this.<sup>2</sup>

In the Yugoslav legation, they are denying the fact that the Yugoslav government was warned about Italy's intentions. They assessed the situation as very serious for Yugoslavia, since any change in Italy's favor of the current situation in Albania would, in fact, annul the Italo-Yugoslav Pact of Belgrade and such a thing would lead to Belgrade's dependence on Rome. The movements of the Italian army and navy explain the desire to put pressure on King Zog and to paralyze every reflex of Yugoslavia. They estimate that the extent of Italy's intentions will become more precise as the course of events unfolds.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, on April 6, 1939, the Polish ambassador in Rome, Wieniawa Długoszowski, brought us a report from his conversation with the Italian foreign minister Ciano, where he stated that he had asked him about the rumors about the action that Italy was aiming for in Albania.<sup>4</sup> He reports that Ciano dodged the main question, and said the matter would be resolved peacefully within 24 hours. As it seems, they intended to put pressure on Zogu to achieve their goals in Albania, so from this we can clearly understand that they had already planned the invasion of Albania.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IPMS, Ambasada Londyn A.12.53/23, 179, 4 kwietnia, telegram szyfrowy ambasadora w Rzymie w związku z włoskimi przygotowaniem do inwazji Albanii, Rzym dnia 4 kwietnia 1939, godzina 22.10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, 179.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, 179.

<sup>4</sup> AAN, Ambasada Berlin 925 (druk raportów. ambasadorskich), 42-44.

<sup>5</sup> Stanisław Żerko, Piotr Długołęcki, *Polskie dokumenty dyplomatyczne 1939 styczeń-sierpień*, Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2005, 308-310.



Photo 1. *This photo shows the Polish ambassador in Rome, General Boleslaw Wieniawa Długoszowski, while getting off the plane.*<sup>6</sup>

### The occupation of Albania by Facist Italy according to the Polish press

In the Polish newspaper *Dziennik Zachodni*, there is an article titled: *Diary of the Minister, Italian before and during the war*, there are some writings of Count Ciano, also brings information about Albania. On March 27, 1939, Ciano wrote that Duce was angry with the king because he was dissatisfied with the policy followed towards Albania. The Italian king declared that such a risk should not be taken for him: *“capturing the four hills”*. These sentences of his greatly irritated Mussolini who said: *If Hitler had to count with such a puppet, he would never have conquered either Austria or Czechoslovakia*. Mussolini also said: *Monarchy does not like fascism because fascism is a monoparty and the kings would like countries to be divided into camps*.<sup>7</sup> On March 29, 1939, Ciano had met with Duce to make a decision regarding Albania, and they had decided that if Ahmet Zogu did not resign, then they would send their ships to Albanian ports and present him with an ultimatum.<sup>8</sup> But if Ahmet Zogu continues to behave obstinately, we will announce our declaration and enter Albania. On March 31, 1939, news from Tirana had confirmed that King Zogu was preparing for resistance. After realizing this, Ciano issued this statement: *This angers me greatly, because I consider it a very dangerous thing for us to fire the first shot in this troubled and inflammable Europe*.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Ciano, among other things,

<sup>6</sup> NAC, jednostka 5899072, Ambasador Polski w Włoszech gen. Boleslaw Wieniawa – Długoszowski wysiada z samolotu.

<sup>7</sup> *Pamiętnik straconego ministra, Włochy przed i w czasie wojny*. *Dziennik Zachodni*. Katowice, 24 marca 1947, Nr. 75 (746), 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

had seen Mussolini on April 5, 1939, describing him as follows: *He is calm, dangerous and more than ever convinced that no one will want to interfere in our accounts with Albania.* Regarding April 7, 1939, Ciano wrote: *On April 7, 1939, I got up at 4 in the morning. Among other things, a telegram was sent to the Duce from Zogu. The telegram confirmed his decision to reach a military solution, while at the same time urging him to begin negotiations. While I left by plane at 6 am. We arrived in Durrës at 7.45. We saw only a few people in Durrës, they must have resisted there, because I saw several units, as if fighting for the port. We continued to Tirana. In the streets of the capital we moved completely freely and calmly. I communicated with Duce and informed him about the situation. He was quite satisfied, especially because there was no reaction from internationals.*<sup>10</sup>

Another Polish newspaper, *Dziennik Polski*, has published an article entitled: *Albania is fighting*, a Polish journalist wrote: *I remember very well that in October 1938 I received confidential information that Hitler, wanting to thank Mussolini for his help during the Munich discussions, had agreed to the annexation of Albania by Italy. I did not use this news as a journalist at that time, because my Albanian and Turkish friends, whom I asked to check this information, assured me that they had deceived me and that by publishing this information I would become an involuntary tool of German propaganda.*<sup>11</sup> According to him, neither Tirana nor Ankara wanted to believe that Italy, which had exercised a kind of protectorate over Albania since 1934, would request official annexation. However, the person who informed me was telling the truth. On *Great Friday* 1939, Italian ships began to bomb Albanian ports. The resistance lasted only a few days. King Zogu, together with the queen and the child of a few days, fled to Greece.<sup>12</sup> Now, Italy entered the Balkans. Both Belgrade and Athens were aware of the danger posed by placing Italy between Yugoslavia and Greece. Stojadinovic was too involved in pro-Axis politics to be able to oppose anything while Greece was powerless. London Paris was also silent, after all this was an era when they tried to remove Mussolini from Hitler, an era that ended only on June 10, 1940. But, Albania did not accept its fate and the Italians faced many troubles, especially with Albanian patriots, who arrested them and sent them to concentration camps. And when, in the fall of 1940, the Italian army left Albania to invade Greece, the Albanian movement immediately began in their cities.<sup>13</sup> However, she soon rested. After entering Southern Albania, the Greeks began to engage in agriculture in a way that left no doubt that they intended to annex these provinces. Greek politicians and journalists considered the land where a small minority of Greeks lived as Greek land. Therefore, it is not surprising that in these conditions of independence the

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Albania Walczy*. *Dziennik Polski*. Londyn, 23 czerwca 1942, Nr. 599, 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.



Albanians did not see the possibility of war together with the Greeks. But the Albanians continued to fight against the Italians, the opposition within the country grew. At one point, the army had to shoot demonstrators in Tirana, killing, among other things, the spiritual head of the Bektashi Muslim sect. Recently, the news was circulating about an agreement between the leader of the Albanian insurgents, the former head of the Albanian gendarmerie, Mehar Bajraktaj, and the famous commander of the Yugoslav army, Draga Mikhailović. The article also states that the Italians were making propaganda in Albania to cause religious divisions. In a similar way, the Germans and Italians incited a strife between Muslims and Christians in Bosnia. However, so far it seems that in Albania these efforts have encountered unfavorable ground. Of course, some Muslims found themselves in a fascist-sponsored organization.<sup>14</sup>

Although Albania is a country occupied and attacked by fascists, it was not invited to join the ranks of the United Nations. The journalist reports that the official recognition of Albania was hindered by the fact that King Zog, although he opposed the Italian invasion, at the last moment could not pretend to represent the Albanian nation in a dignified manner. However, it should be noted that the Albanians, like many other nations, are fighting for freedom.<sup>15</sup>

While the other Polish newspaper *Expres Zagłębia*, on April 7, 1939, published three articles regarding Albania. In the article titled: *Albania's strong denial of rumors about its submission to Italy*, the Havasa agency reported that the Albanian Royal Legation communicates: *To put an end to the one-sided messages spread by the press and radio, the last days, the press office of the Albanian Legation in France has the honor to report the following: Albania will maintain its independence, sovereignty and integrity. It will also not allow foreign troops to land on its territory. For the defense alliance concluded between Albania and Italy in 1928, canceling the pact concluded in Tirana in 1926 and not renewed in 1931, this agreement does not in any case authorize Italy to the end and it cannot intervene to maintain order in Albania.*<sup>16</sup> So they constantly emphasized that it was only about a defensive alliance, so there is no reason to assume that Italy's attitude towards Albania will change, but as we will see, the opposite happened because Italy invaded Albania. In the next article: *Yugoslavia worried*, it is said that Italy's action in Albania caused a great concern in Yugoslavia, especially the sending of such a large number of Italian soldiers to Albanian ports. Yugoslavia stated that the Italians were aiming to take Durrës, Shkodra and Vlora, which represented a potential danger to Yugoslavia.<sup>17</sup> This newspaper also published an article with the title: *Albania is preparing for war and promises to fight to the last man*, emphasizing that the possibility of Italian troops landing in Albania caused a strong uproar in that country. Thus, to discuss

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ostre zaprzeczenie Albanii wobec pogłosek o jej uległości przed Włochami*. *Expres Zagłębia*. Sonsowice, 7 kwietnia 1939, Nr. 97, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Jugosławia Zaniepokojona*. *Expres Zagłębia*. Sonsowice, 7 kwietnia 1939, Nr. 97, 1.

the situation yesterday in Tirana, the Council of Ministers met, which discussed until the late hours of the night. According to further announcements, the people of Albania are now living in a tense atmosphere and express their determination to protect the country's independence. King Zogu would declare that, if necessary, the Albanians would fight to the last man. The New York Herald reports that several anti-German and anti-Italian demonstrations took place in Tirana. Italian naval forces were concentrated in Bari and Brindisi. They assume that the reason for the demonstrations in Tirana was the dissatisfaction of the Albanians for Monday's news through the Bari radio station about the negotiations for the revision of the Italian-Albanian alliance. Also in this news it was emphasized that: *The Albanian Prime Minister announced in the parliament the birth of the heir to the throne, who was received by the room with loud applause. Across the country there was also a military parade in front of the king and the royal family.*<sup>18</sup> The Polish press was very interested in the situation in Albania during the years 1938-1939, as numerous articles were published regarding the situation in Albania as well as Italy's intentions in that country. Although there were writings that Albania would fight to the last man, we will see that there will be a small resistance and Zogu will leave.



Photo 2. *This photo shows the article „Albania is fighting” presented in the newspaper Dziennik Polski.*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Albania przygotowuje się do wojny i obiecuje walczyć do ostatniego człowieka.* *Expres Zagłębia.* Sonsowice, 7 kwietnia 1939, Nr. 97, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Albania Walczy.* *Dziennik Polski.* Londyn, 23 czerwca 1942, Nr. 599, 3.





Photo 3. This photo shows the article: „Diary of the Minister, Italy before and during the war”, published in the newspaper *Dziennik Zachodni*.<sup>20</sup>

## The departure of Ahmet Zogu from Albania according to Polish sources

By 1939, further evidence had already been established that Germany and Italy were on a course that would plunge the world into war. What happened on *Great Friday*, April 7, 1939, when Italy attacked Albania, a poor mountainous country across the Adriatic, proved this. Colonel Abaz Kupa gathered both battalions of regular Albanian troops and several hundred mountaineers and resisted the Italians for 72 hours, giving King Zog time to leave. Once again France and Britain did nothing, the British government considered Italy's annexation of Albania as an attempt to discourage Italy from forming an alliance

<sup>20</sup> *Pamiętnik straconego ministra, Włochy przed i w czasie wojny*. *Dziennik Zachodni*. Katowice, 24 marca 1947, Nr. 75 (746), 3.

with Germany, but a coming war was always more obvious and inevitable.<sup>21</sup> April 7, 1939, was a key date in the history of the Albanian state. That day, in the morning, military units of the army of the Kingdom of Italy entered Albania. Practically within a few days, the country was occupied by the troops of General Alfredo Guzzoni. The weak Albanian army, due to the considerable disproportion of the forces, could not make a long-term resistance. There were clashes only in some parts. The fiercest fighting was in the port of Durrës. There, the local gendarmerie commander, Major Abaz Kupi, led the defense.<sup>22</sup> On April 5, 1939, was born the son of royal couple, Leka I Zogu and just two days later, on April 7, 1939, Italian troops entered Albania. Then King Zogu together with his family left for Greece. From there he made his way to London, passing through Poland where he was also in Warsaw.<sup>23</sup>

*In the following, we are presenting some photographs of Ahmet Zogu and his wife Geraldina taken in Warsaw:*



Photo 4. *The photo shows the car in which Ahmet Zogu arrived in Warsaw in July 1939.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> David Wragg, *Wojna Brytyjsko-Francuska 1940*, Bellona, Warszawa 2011, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Arkadiusz Karabowiak, *Albania w czasie II wojny światowej i początkowych latach komunistycznej dyktatury. (Cz.I od wybuchu wojny do kapitulacji włos)*. Rocznik Bezpieczeństwa Międzynarodowego 2012/2013. Dolnośląska Szkoła Wyższa. Wrocław: 2012-2013, 284.

<sup>23</sup> Stanisław Figiel, *Albania Przewodnik*, Rewasz, Warszawa 2011, 159.

<sup>24</sup> Repozytorium Cyfrowe Filмотeki Narodowej, Sygn. MF. 517. Lata 1939. Królowa Geraldine z mężem z wizytą w Warszawie.



Photo 5. *Queen Geraldine is shown in the photo together with Ahmet Zogu during the visit to Warsaw.*<sup>25</sup>



Photo 6. *The King of Albania Ahmet Zogu I together with his wife accompanied by many other people, Warsaw July 1939.*<sup>26</sup>

### **The report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland regarding the letter sent by Ahmet Zogu**

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland there is also a report titled: *Note for Albania, regarding King Zog's letter to the Prime Minister*, and dated October 3, 1941. The report states: Albania became the object of Italian aggression on Good Friday, April 7, 1939. King Ahmet Zogu, together with his family and some courtiers, left the country, even though he called on his nation

<sup>25</sup> RCFN, Sygn. MF.517, 1939.

<sup>26</sup> NAC, sygn. 1-D-10-3. Król Albani Achmed Zogu I wraz z małżonką Geraldyną z wizytą w Polsce. Warszawa. Lipiec 1939 rok.

to defend itself. This therefore reduced his authority in the country and brought relatively easier control by the Italian government. Shefqet Vërlaci, the king's enemy, led the pro-Italian government which, under the guise of a parliamentary procedure, overthrew the king, and declared the Italian monarch king of Albania. The Italians were planning an attack in the Balkans starting from Albania. The Italians provided the natives with a considerable amount of work and profits, and we may say, that in this extremely poor country they gained a kind of sympathy.<sup>27</sup>

The Albanian people are a freedom-loving and brave people, and although since 1912, that is, since the creation of the Albanian state, no regime has been able to stabilize there, and undoubtedly Albania after the war wants and will seek to be an independent state. However, we have doubts if King Zog will have enough support in the Albanian nation to regain the throne. By first using the defense of Yugoslavia to gain power, and then by making his country dependent on Italy, he has also lost the trust of his Balkan neighbors. It should be emphasized that Greece and Yugoslavia cannot allow Italy to settle in Albania. However, while Yugoslavia favors the independence of Albania, and its inclusion in the Balkan bloc, there are certain tendencies in Greece to liquidate Albania. In fact, Albania has many economic and financial problems. The country is too poor to be able to bear the financial burden of a modern state in its current stage of evolution, and as it happened in relation to Italy in recent years, this proves that Albania easily becomes dependent on a financial partner. Ahmet Zogu had sent a similar letter to Władysław Sikorski to the government of: Belgium, Norway, the Czech Republic and Great Britain. But even though Greece and Yugoslavia were the most interested countries, Ahmet Zogu did not direct them. According to his letter he had done so in a different form and at an earlier date. From the interview conducted by the Embassy of Poland with the Foreign Office, some very important points are highlighted such as:

- a) King Zog's letter to Prime Minister Churchill has not yet received any reply.
- b) The other governments that Ahmet Zogu addressed are waiting until the decision is taken by the Foreign Office.
- c) The Foreign Office will communicate the file and the text to us as soon as it takes a decision.<sup>28</sup>

But on this occasion it was clarified that the British government approaches the Albanian issue, separately from the issue of King Zog, and this information comes from Antoni Balinski's conversation with the Foreign Office:

- a) The British Government, in accordance with the general trend, does not wish to be bound by any obligations for the future, and believes that

<sup>27</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwum Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 1 Box 3, 1941, 1, Notatka w sprawie Albanii, w związku z listem Króla Albańskiego do Pana Premiera, Londyn, dnia 3 października 1941 r.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 1-2.

Yugoslavia and Greece are mainly interested, to whom King Zog has not at present addressed himself.

- b) As for the personality of King Ahmet Zogu, he is not favored by England. He came to England at the time of the French disaster, when the British government could not refuse him. However, he was accepted without enthusiasm and on the condition that he must stay away from any political action.<sup>29</sup>

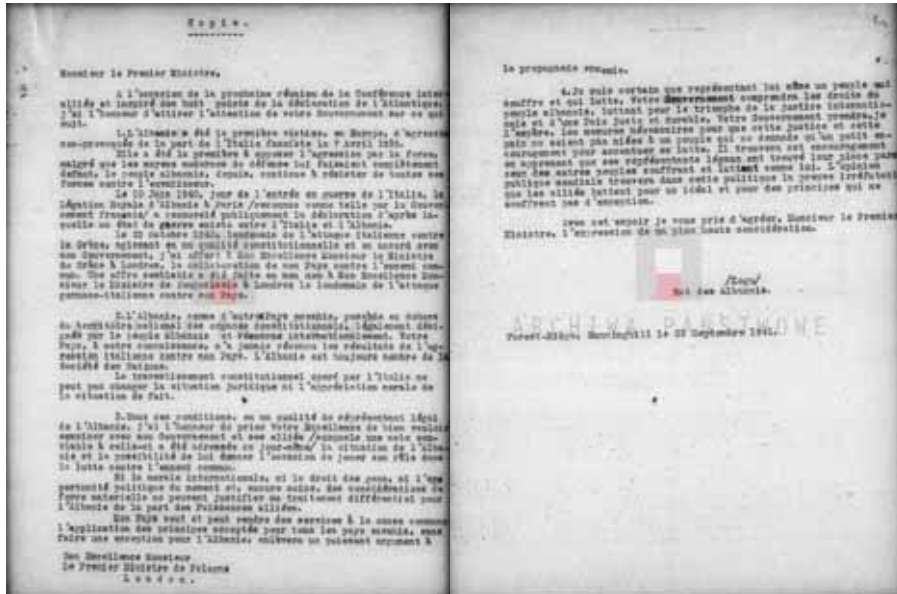


Photo 7. This photo shows the letter that Ahmet Zogut sent to the Polish Prime Minister in London, Władysław Sikorski.<sup>30</sup>

### Antoni Balinski's letter to Minister Kazimierz Roman Dębicki regarding Britain's attitude towards Ahmet Zog

In a letter entitled: *Note to the Ambassador*, addressed by Antoni Balinski to Minister Debicki, dated October 4, 1941, it is noted that: *With the instructions of the Ambassador, I turned to the Foreign Office and asked them what is the position of the British Council regarding the issue raised from King Zog considering that they are also victims of aggression.* The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Britain explained to me that Churchill also received a letter from King

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p.1-3.

<sup>30</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 1 Box 3, 1941, Monsieur le Premier Ministre, Son Excellence Monsieur Le Premier Ministre de Pologne London: 3-4.



Zog, apparently it has the same content as the letter sent by him to Władysław Sikorski. The ministry has not given any answer and is already preparing a draft, which has not yet been approved by the government. They promised to send me a copy of this letter as soon as it is finalized. On this occasion, the Foreign Office will give Antoni Baliński the explanation that we are presenting below.<sup>31</sup>

On December 2, 1941, Antoni Baliński sends Minister K.R. Dębicki, the answer which comes from the Foreign Office by Pierson Dixon emphasizing that: *On October 3, we were asked what answer the Prime Minister proposed regarding the letter of King Zog, where he expressed the hope that Albania will be represented in the inter-allied conferences.* I want to tell you that after careful consideration and considering the fact that King Zog is not recognized as a representative of the Albanian state and is in this country only as an individual Mr. Winston Churchill responded by limiting himself to a formal recognition. So, as can be seen from these documents, after leaving the country, Ahmet Zogu was no longer recognized as a representative of Albania.<sup>32</sup>

### **The letter sent by Alfred Poninski, head of the general consulate in Istanbul**

In the report known as Confidential, dated May 27, 1942, which by the Minister Plenipotentiary Alfred Poninski who was the head of the Consulate General of the Polish Republic in Istanbul, reports that: The pro-independence Albanian representative here, working since 1939 in analogous conditions with the representatives of other occupied countries, periodically contradicts the claims that the majority of the Albanian society passively accepted the Italian occupation and in support of his claims, discreetly distributes materials about the insurrectionary activities and actions in Albania. The Consul General of Albania in Istanbul, together with his associates, maintains normal and social relations with the representatives of the United Nations. While the Greeks maintain a critical attitude towards the Albanians, which is explained by the desire to seek compensation in Albania after the current war.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwum Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 1 Box 3, 1941, p.1-2, Notatka dla Pana Ambasadora, Antoni Baliński otrzymuje P. Minister Dębicki, Londyn dn. 4 października 1941.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwum Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr.2 Box 8, 1942, p.8, Poufne, Konsul Generalny R.P w Stambule A.Poniński.



## The report of the Polish officer who was part of the British mission regarding the situation in Albania after the capitulation of Italy

To describe the situation in Albania after the fall of Italy, we are referring to another archival source, titled *Por'Linka from the stay in Albania (it is about a Polish officer who was part of the British mission in Albania)*. He emphasized that the political situation in Albania differs from other Balkan countries. After the fall of Yugoslavia in 1941, Italy annexed to Albania the areas that lay to the north and east of its former border with the cities of Gostivar, Tetova, Kirçova, Prizren, Gjakova, Peja, Plava and Dibra. This area is generally known as Kosovo and is always a hot spot in the Balkans. The fear of Albanians towards Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians is absolutely greater than towards any enemy. He described this region as a place inhabited by 50% Albanians, while 45% emphasized that they were Serbs and Macedonians, but there were always, according to him, other nationalities as well. *After the fall of Italy in 1943, the Germans declared Albania as an independent state and expanded the borders a little further. In an appeal addressed to the Albanians, they declared that they do not recognize Albania as an occupied state and that they intended to settle only in some important strategic points. The Germans promised not to interfere in Albania's internal affairs and not to use Albanian troops for war purposes. Of course, these promises were not kept from the beginning. Albania is a kingdom with a Regency Council. The Regency Council consisted of Mehdi Frashëri, Lef Nosi and Safa Ulqinaku. Xhafer Deva was appointed prime minister by the Regency Council. Xhafer Deva was a well-known careerist from the Kosovo region. Xhafer Deva, being one of the biggest enemies of the Serbs, left his country to end the cooperation with the Germans. He created two Albanian SS divisions (in German uniforms) which, with about 8,000 men each, were the only army that did not hesitate to take part in anti-British expeditions. The Albanian government has changed four times since its creation. In January 1944, Xhafer Deva resigned and after some quick changes, Rexhep Mitrovica became prime minister, a very pro-allied man, capable, intelligent and a great opponent of Russia and the communists. He immediately engaged his personal and political friends in the cooperation, such as Fiqri Dine, Hysni Dema / chief of gendarmerie/, Rizo Drini / prefect of Shkodra district/, Cene Lezi / family head of Ndreu, etc. All of these are known to me, emphasized the Polish officer. Fiqri Dine former influencer of the government. Currently Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs. This same year, in the fall of 1943, the activity of the partisans increased.<sup>34</sup> But as far as governance in Albania is concerned, as it appears from this report, the Polish officer was not well informed. We say this,*

<sup>34</sup>AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 1-2, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch.

since Xhafer Deva never held the post of Prime Minister in Albania, but was Minister of Internal Affairs and, as we mentioned above, Rexhep Mitrovica was appointed to the position of Prime Minister. We can also say that the role given to Xhafer Deva by the Polish officer in the creation of the Albanian SS, as well as the figures mentioned in the report, are exaggerated and do not coincide with reality. Because the main role in the creation of this institution and the recruitment of people was played by the Germans themselves, just as they did in other countries, such as Bosnia, Croatia, Bulgaria and in many countries outside the Balkans.

LNÇ was already operating in Albania. This illegal organization has been operating in Albania since its occupation by Italy and initially consisted of all branches of political parties. It currently has a communist character, according to the model of Tito's partisan organization, from which it receives direct orders, has political commissars in the army and is much more involved in political propaganda and fighting political opponents than in the fight against the German occupier. The LNÇ was greatly strengthened after the surrender of Italy, because they took into their hands the weapons, ammunition and supplies of the 2 Italian divisions, which were not handed over to the Germans. It is about the Firenze division of General Azzi. A large part of one of these divisions went over to the partisan side. They received them very warmly at first, but later they took away their men's weapons and part of the men of the division went to the villages to look for work and were partly defeated by the Germans during the great winter attack, about 2 battalions would die in Mountain Pit from hunger and frost. The then chief of the British mission in that district paid General Azzi 1,000 gold sovereigns for the living expenses of the soldiers during the winter. Having strong suspicions that Azzi had embezzled the money, the British Mission notified Bar by telegraph. On June 7, 1944, General Azzi was evacuated to Italy and 250 gold sovereigns were found near him. The activity of the LNÇ after the fall of Italy turned against the small German forces and at first gave good results.<sup>35</sup> The Allies supported this action by sending weapons as well as a special mission. However, this mission was liquidated by the Germans on January 7, 1944, where the entire staff consisting of 4 officers and 4 non-commissioned officers were eliminated, only the major survived. In the action against the LNÇ, not only the Germans took part, but also the government forces, mainly the gendarmes and the anti-partisan gang of the local population. These irregular gangs are called in Albania "ballist", a name which is wrongly used to describe all anti-partisan elements. In fact, it is the name of a national-republican political party, as described by the Polish officer who was part of the British mission. The LNÇ had cooperated with this party in the beginning, so immediately after the fall of Italy they worked together, but soon there was a division and there were

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<sup>35</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwum Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 2-3, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch.

fierce fights for different political backgrounds. Even the royal party of the Zogists left the LNCÇ with their leader Abaz Kupa, but not cooperating with either the Germans or the LNCÇ.<sup>36</sup>

In the winter of 1943/44, this situation was created: the southern part of Albania from the Shumbin River to the north was practically under the influence of the LNCÇ, with the exception of the coast, roads and cities, which were occupied by the Germans. He also claims that he has never personally been to this part of Albania. The northern area of Albania, with the exception of the points occupied by the Germans, was controlled by different political parties, mainly by people who were anti-communist and anti-LNCÇ to whom the Polish officer refers and calls them “nationalists” in the report. He further asserts that German propaganda in this period of time did everything it could to bring Albania into fratricidal fights, realizing that this was the best way to ensure the security of its relatively small size. They continued throughout the winter and spring of 1944. As for the nationalists, there are several main groups: a relatively small group Xhafer Deva and some Kosovars, clearly anti-Allied and pro-German, committed to cooperation with the Germans. The attitudes of this group are constantly changing with the failures of Germany during the war. The main part of German propaganda is and has always been the issue of Kosovo, which the Germans eventually gave to Albania, unlike the allies who did not promise anything to the Albanians.<sup>37</sup>

I think this is the center of gravity of nationalist politics and all issues revolve around it. It seems to me absolutely impossible to convince the nationalists to fight against the Germans without first clarifying this point, emphasized the Polish officer. The Zogist party, with its leader Abaz Kupa, started the war against the Italians after they invaded Albania. But these activities came within the framework of the LNCÇ. After the separation from the LNCÇ, there was an unwritten agreement between the Zogists and the Germans that they would not start actions against each other. Zogists never attacked the LNCÇ. This party is militarily organized, has its own newspapers, partially mobilized and if necessary, can have about 35 thousand people in arms. It has a mission of British troops and is considered illegal by the Albanian government. It has a very large influence in the regions of Mirdita. The Democratic Party of “Tirana” is not essentially a political party and is only referred to by this name by us. It consists of a variety of northern Albanian cadets, clearly anti-partisan and anti-communist, willing to cooperate with the Germans only insofar as their security and the possibility of gaining power to fight the LNCÇ, are concerned. They all also collaborate with the British, and most are engaged in active warfare against the LNCÇ. There are also a number of parties with national colors which do not cooperate with the Germans. They actively cooperate with British military missions. However, they do not intend to start a war against the Germans, this is

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, 2-3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

because they want to avoid repression and also they have realized that this will not bring them any positive benefit.<sup>38</sup> While the allies do not promise them more than independence after the war, and as for Kosovo, the allies do not make any promises. All national parties agree in principle on one point, that is, they are all anti-communist and also anti-LNÇ. They try to maintain good relations with the Allies, expecting the Allies to support the Partisans only as long as they need to fight the Germans. After the war, however, they expect Allied sympathies to turn to the nationalists. They claim that Albania, not being an independent country at the beginning of the war, has no obligation to the Allies. She is too weak to start a war on her own. They claim that when Italy invaded Albania, the only response to Albania's protest was official recognition of the facts by England, which at that time wanted good relations with Italy. Today, when England wants to fight Germany, it declares people who collaborate with Germany as war criminals, but the Polish officer points out that these people are forced to do so by circumstances. With very few exceptions, all these national political factions promise to attack the Germans the moment British troops land in the Balkans, but they steadfastly refuse to do so earlier for fear of reprisals.<sup>39</sup>

Only Zogists are ready to do this immediately if England recognizes King Zog's right to the Albanian throne, or if she recognizes the official Albanian government next to the English government, following the example of other governments of occupied countries located in London. They make the particular argument that Czechoslovakia has an official government even though it was occupied by the Germans before England entered the war. The most difficult situation has been created in Kosovo, where people live in fear of reprisals from the Serbs. Therefore, if this part of Albania rejoins Yugoslavia, the Albanians are very afraid of Mihailovic's Chetniks, whose expeditions have visited the border villages several times.<sup>40</sup>

This report continues the description of LNÇ partisans. It is noted that this party was founded after the invasion of Albania by Italy in 1939. It consisted of all political factions, there were Albanian army officers, gendarmes, many Italian army officers of Albanian origin and generally all those who had fled to the mountains to fight. One of its most active members and the commander of the armed forces would be Major Abaz Kupa, the current leader of the Zogist party. Communists joined the organization, but they did not make any special propaganda, on the contrary, it was always declared that this organization was apolitical and aimed only at fighting the occupier. The party's armed forces, until the fall of Italy, never exceeded 5,000 men and, acting as separate squads of 50-300 men, were limited to transport raids and small-scale sabotage. They were poorly armed and had to get weapons and ammunition from the enemy. In general, they enjoyed the sympathy of the population, which helped them with

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, 3-4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 3-4.

food and shelter. The villagers used repressions, some villages were burned to help the partisans. Communist propaganda began to strengthen gradually, despite assurances that no political party had priority in the LNÇ, a fact worth noting is that very soon only communists and those of the Comintern school held leadership positions within it. These people usually stayed in Russia for several years. Some leadership positions were filled by Yugoslav and Macedonian communists. This fact caused great bitterness to the population with national colors. On the other hand, the propaganda well led by the LNÇ, gained many supporters, especially among the school students, the intelligentsia and the semi-intelligentsia of the city.<sup>41</sup> The first British military mission arrived in Albania from Greece in May 1943. This mission provided assistance to the LNÇ and led to a temporary agreement between the LNÇ and the National Front who at the time were also an illegal organization aiming to fight the occupier. Two months later, the mission was expanded with 5 officers and 8 non-commissioned officers, there were also individual officers who operated in separate points, giving them financial and material assistance, organizing major sabotages, etc. The acts were directed against the Italian occupation forces and produced good results. After the fall of Italy, the situation changed radically in favor of the LNC, they occupied several important transport centers such as: Dibra, Berat, Peshkopi and some small roads. During this period, the Germans preserved only a few roads such as: the coastal road Janinë-Vlorë-Durrës-Shkodër-Podgorica and the Shkodër-Kukës-Prizren road as well as the Tirana-Elbasan-Strugë-Manastir road. These roads were very well paved, so the partisans would never succeed in interrupting communications on them. In this situation, the British decided to send a serious mission to Albania with a brigade in charge. I was also part of this mission, emphasizes the Polish officer.<sup>42</sup>

During this period of time, various efforts were made both by Albanians of different political groups and by the army of the British mission to bring an understanding between the LNÇ and the various factions of parties with national colors. But these efforts did not yield any results, due to the uncompromising attitude of the LNÇ, which always put forward as the first condition of the agreement – the absolute submission of the other parties to the LNÇ organization and the commitment of the other parties not to carry out anti-communist propaganda in any form.<sup>43</sup> For its part, the LNÇ, despite the guarantees, continued to carry out very strong communist and pro-federal propaganda against other Balkan states. It is certain that all general political directives of the LNÇ came directly from Tito's Headquarters and indirectly from Moscow. Every time

<sup>41</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 5, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 5-6, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch.

the LNC had a decision to make, even less important, even in relation to the British Mission, we sometimes had to wait 2 or 3 weeks for an answer, they needed this time to communicate with Tito's Headquarters. The Germans took advantage of this political situation in the first place. The well-developed propaganda led from the first days of November 1943 to armed clashes in the Dibra region between nationalists and partisans. After the first failed attack against the LNC forces in this area on November 16, 1943, the nationalists attacked again, where 2 German battalions took part on their side, as well as tanks and artillery on the side. Within 24 hours, all the districts of Dibra and Peshkopi and the roads Burel-Peshkopi and Burel-Diber were occupied by the Germans, who never retreated from there. Partisans with relatively light losses retreated to the mountains of Martanesh.<sup>44</sup> The members of the Italian division of Firenze about 400 unarmed men, with General Puccini and part of the officers also retreated. At the same time, the actions against the LNC are launched throughout Albania. Both Germans and Belgians participated in these actions. The Albanian government does not take any measures against the LNC and the participation of the Ballistas and others against them is unofficial and not organized by the government. Throughout the winter, these attacks were constantly repeated and led practically to the expulsion of the partisans from the northern part of Albania, south of the river Shkumbin, as well as the complete liquidation of the British Headquarters, as well as the loss of all our men. There were many casualties among the mission personnel, many killed, wounded and missing. In total, the mission lost 48% of its personnel in Albania, including the plane disaster.

The relation of the population to the members of the British mission of troops, with a few exceptions, was not distinctly hostile.<sup>45</sup> There are well-known cases when the Albanians who participated in the fight alongside the Germans led the British officers through the German lines at night to facilitate their escape from the trap. On November 25, 1943, the Polish officer states: *I myself was a guest in the house of Hadji Neka for two days, when I tried to sneak out of the gathering and was received in a very hospitable manner, although all his men took part in the actions on the side of the Germans.* In the spring of 1944, the partisans reorganized their forces, which now consist of 2 independent brigade divisions (about 25,000 people in total) and began to attack the government forces. At the moment, bloody clashes are taking place. The Germans help the government and the nationalists as much as possible, but the partisans managed to get close to Tirana. In the north of Albania, on the Yugoslav border, fighting is taking place between the partisan brigade "Odret" and the Germans and Kosovar SS. I met with the "Odret" Brigade led by Fadil Hoxha on June 27, 1944 near Valborna. In the brigade headquarters there are several Montenegrin officers

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 6-7, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch.



from Tito's headquarters and the commander openly admits that he receives his orders not from the LNCÇ command in Albania, but directly from Tito.<sup>46</sup> Summarizing what I said above, it can be said that the whole of Albania is today divided into two distinct factions: all the national parties are united under the banner of the war against the communists and the LNCÇ and cover mainly the northern part of Albania and the LNCÇ with its supporters in the south. He also points out that German propaganda constantly incites this war and the outcome is difficult to predict.<sup>47</sup>

### **The occupation of Albania by Nazi Germany according to the report of the Polish officer who was part of the British mission**

According to the Polish officer, after the capitulation of Italy, the Germans had only 3 army battalions in Albania and part of the aviation personnel at the Tirana airport. At the time of the disarmament of the Italian troops, they brought aid from both Greece and Yugoslavia. In October – December 1943, the total number of German divisions was estimated at about 4 divisions, including 1 SS, 111 Mountain division, 1 Jaeger division, and 297 divisions, mixed units. In January 1944, after frequent regroupings, the Germans reduced their effectiveness in Albania to two incomplete divisions, each with a strength of about 10,000 men. These forces occupied only the coast, the main towns and the roads. A whole part of the coast is occupied by the southern division of Brandenburg and by a division composed of Moslem-Turkestanian troops. The roads controlled and constantly patrolled by the Germans are as follows: the road from Janina to Tirana via Vlora and Gjirokastra, the road Tirana-Elbasan-Strugë-Manastir, the road Tirana-Durrës-Shkodër-Podgorica, the road Shkodër-Pukë-Kukës-Prizren – Skopje and the road Prizren-Gjakovë-Pej. All important bridges and towns on these roads have garrisons, which are guarded day and night, and crossing these roads requires great care.<sup>48</sup> Alive from the mission, a German soldier gets 21 days' home leave and money, while nothing for the dead. He also brings us information regarding the activity of the Gestapo in this region. Where he states that: *I have encountered Gestapo activity only in the districts of Dibra, Luma, Gostivar, Tetova, Kîrçova and Prizren.* The head of the Gestapo for this district is Karl Berger, who belongs to the Gestapo headquarters in Belgrade, and is headquartered in Gostivar. To ensure peace and security in this troubled region, he established contacts with local Albanian bandits such as: Xhafer Lida, Mersi Madija, Selim Noka, etc. He offered them the following solution: the German

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 6-7.

<sup>48</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 7-8, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch, Uwagi i spostrzeżenia-Niemcy na terenie Albanji Październik 1943-czerwiec 1944.

authorities will watch and help the exploits of these gentlemen in the Tetovo-Gostivar-Kičovo area where they used to cross the Korab mountains with their gangs, robbing the locals, population without distinction of religion or nationality, and they in return, will undertake to fight any subversive and competitive gangs as well as partisans that may appear in this area. I managed to send the above-mentioned Karl Berger's correspondence, but unfortunately I had to destroy it later, being in a very difficult situation, the Polish officer points out. The Gestapo plan was only partially successful and so far only Xhafer Lita is cooperating with them. In their propaganda speeches, German agents use the slogan: *Albania has two enemies, internal and external – we can protect you from the external enemy, and you must protect yourself from the internal enemy*. This propaganda has little effect when it comes to directives since this cooperation gives results only in the fight against the partisans.<sup>49</sup> In the report, he also provides us with data on the organization of the partisan forces. Partisan forces, he emphasized, are organized in unit brigades, which in turn are divided into battalions and teams. The number of sizes of these units is different and ranges from 1,000 to 5,000 people for 1 brigade. If necessary, divisions consisting of two or three brigades are created, and so far two such divisions have been created. The partisans basically do not have officers, only the commanders of brigades, battalions and detachments, and they do not have any signs and do not wear any special uniform that would distinguish them from others. People are mostly dressed in Italian and English uniforms and partly in civilian clothes. The distinguishing mark of the partisans is a black double-headed eagle on a red shield, above which is a five-pointed red Soviet star without a hammer and sickle. Each brigade and battalion has a political commissar and three deputy commissars. The greeting of the partisans was "*Death to Fascism*" – "*Freedom of the Nation*". Partisan high command does not have the ability to control all brigades and battalions.<sup>50</sup>

Among the leading personalities of the partisan movement, it should be mentioned: Enver Hoxha – President of the LNC and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Mustafa Gjinishi was chief of staff, Dushnica – chief political commissar, Dushanovic – member of Tito's agent staff, Kadri Hoxha, Haxhi Lesi – commander of the "Dibra" brigade, Hakif Lesi – commander of the Dibra battalion, Esat Ndreu – commander in the Lume district, Haki Stërmilli – was in Russia for 5 years, is an agent of the Comintern, a talented writer and propagandist. The attitude of the partisans towards the British Mission is correct, but mistrustful. They regard the English as opponents of communism and insincere friends of Russia. The attitude towards the Poles is very favorable and they often give as an example to their soldiers the heroism of the Polish soldiers and the fact that Poland never formed a Quisling government. Officially there, apart from the English and Americans, there is no other mission of troops near

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, 7-8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, 8-9.

the partisans. Officers from Greek, Macedonian, Bulgarian and Yugoslav organizations often come there unofficially.<sup>51</sup>

As for the nationalists, he emphasizes that they do not have a military organization, except for some Zogist battalions that remained under the command of Abaz Kupa. These units are organized according to the model of the former units of the Albanian army – but they do not have uniforms. The British mission does not provide them with arms, or rather in a very small quantity, because they do not take an active part in the war against the Germans. Other armed nationalist units are not military in nature, they are gangs led by local chiefs and mobilized by them when necessary. They are all armed with rifles, which every Albanian over the age of 14 has and always carries with them, and they receive help with weapons and ammunition from the Germans to fight the LNÇ. As for the gendarmerie, it is basically the executive branch of the government, organized according to the model of the former organization of the Albanian gendarmerie created by General Persi and Hill, both of whom were English. They are recruited in the region and usually an officer is one of the local leaders, at least 50% of gendarmerie majors are illiterate. They are fed and uniformed at the expense of the government, they receive a salary of 15 paper napoleons per month, which is ½ of a gold sovereign. The pension of a lieutenant is 100 napoleons, while that of a major is 200 napoleons.<sup>52</sup> Among other things, this Polish officer states in his report that he has not encountered Poles in Albania. *I have not met them either in the German units or in the Todt's organization. Also, I have not heard that any Polish emigrant has been to Albania.* As for the traffic, he writes that there are no railways in Albania, but only some circular roads that connect the main cities. These roads are completely run by the Germans. No bus passes over these roads. Civilian trucks or passenger cars are rarely seen. You can only move through the mountains on foot or on horseback. This route is extremely tiring and slow, yet it is the safest way. You must have guides from a friendly family, under whose care and responsibility the trip takes place. In the current conditions, it is extremely difficult to move because there is constant fighting and at a time like this it is almost impossible. In winter, due to heavy snow, movement in the mountainous area is almost impossible.<sup>53</sup> The currency in circulation is the Albanian Napoleon, equal to 20 Albanian francs, guaranteed by the Italian Bank which, until the outbreak of the war, was equal to the French gold Napoleon. Foreign paper money, including

<sup>51</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 9-10, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch, Organizacja Partyzanckich sił zbrojnych.

<sup>52</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 10-11, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch, Organizacja sił zbrojnych narodowców i zogistów.

<sup>53</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 12, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch, Komunikacja.

pounds sterling and US dollars, the Albanian does not recognize and does not exchange. A traveler in this area should equip himself with gold and pounds. Or with French Napoleons, or Turkish liras, because only these gold coins are known to everyone in Albania. The German army used Napoleon's paper.<sup>54</sup>

The former Italian lira has no value. In this report he also talks about Albanian customs, among other things he emphasizes that in Albania the guest is a holy person. The woman mainly does all the household and economic work. She must not appear to a stranger, nor speak to him, unless she is alone at home and has to entertain a guest or friend of her husband. The family feeling is very developed. Every family is always headed by the oldest and in rare cases the most educated member of the family. The educational level of the population is scandalous: in northern Albania there are about 80% who are completely illiterate. The population lives on cornbread and beans. Meat can be bought very easily, however, the population considers meat a luxury delicacy and consumes it only in case of big holidays, for example: when they have a guest at home. Albanians love guns and each of them has one at home. Hygienic conditions are in a deplorable state. They don't know any doctors, and they only have local doctors. In the end, he emphasizes that the above remarks refer to the rural population of Northern Albania, because he does not know the urban population and their customs.<sup>55</sup>

While in another document Dr. Tadeusz Luboczewski informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland about the report mentioned above. Following the report No: 97/Pol/44 regarding relations with Albania, I report that in the middle of July last year one of the Polish officers who was assigned to the British mission from October 1943 to July last year was returned from Albania, and an interesting report of this officer is in the High Command. Based on the above-mentioned report, I inform you that the leader of the supporters of King Ahmet Zogu is the former Albanian major Abaz Kupi, a capable and fair man who since 1939 fought against the Italians and never collaborated with the Germans. Initially he collaborated with the National Liberation Front, but when this organization was taken over by the Communists, he left and bitterly opposed it.<sup>56</sup> We consider that the Polish diplomats in their descriptions were quite informed and detailed and above all had a very impartial attitude, also due to the fact that, as stated in many diplomatic documents of the time, Poland had no interest in Albanian affairs. Considering this fact, we consider that the Polish

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<sup>54</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 12, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch, Waluty.

<sup>55</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, 13, Wyciąg z raportu Por. LINKA z pobytu w Albanji, Sytuacja polityczna Albanji po upadku Włoch, Zwyczaje i Obyczaje.

<sup>56</sup> AAN, Hoover Institution-Zdigitalizowano w Narodowym Archiwium Cyfrowym, Mikrofilm Folder Nr. 2 Box 23, 1944, Poselstwo R.P. przy rządzie jugosławiańskim No:104/Pol/44/ Do Pana Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych, Dr. Tadeusz Lubaczewski.

archival provenance is a good and authentic point of view to write and contribute on this topic.

## Summary

In the period of the Second World War (1939-1945), the relations between Poland and Albania were influenced by the developments of the time and the general situation in Europe. Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany in September 1939, starting World War II. Meanwhile, Albania was under the occupation of fascist Italy, which had an alliance with Germany. In this period, due to the occupation of Poland and various situations in Eastern Europe, there were not many official relations between Poland and Albania. Albania was more involved in regional events and the fight against fascist invaders, while Poland was involved in World War II as one of the allies of the Allied Powers. In addition, due to the difficult situation and the division of control of the territories by the Nazi and fascist invaders, relations between the two countries have not developed to the level of express diplomatic cooperation. However, there were some attempts by Albanians to help the evacuation of Polish refugees through the roads of Yugoslavia, in the period of their migration from occupied Poland.

Polish diplomacy had a special interest in Albania. The diplomacy of the Polish state is one of the diplomacy that, without being linked to any specific interest, has followed the situation in Albania. The Polish ambassador in Rome, Wieniawa Długoszewski, was reporting on Italy's preparations for the invasion of Albania. He also brings us a very interesting report from his conversation with Count Ciano. The invasion of Albania by Italy on April 7, 1939, aroused interest even in the Polish press of the time. During this period, numerous articles were published in newspapers such as *Dziennik Polski*, *Dziennik Zachodni*, *Expres Zagłębia*, etc. A very important document is also the letter that Ahmet Zogu sent to the Polish Prime Minister in London, Władysław Sikorski. Emphasizing that Albania was the first victim of fascist aggression in Europe. Ahmet Zogu had sent a similar letter to Władysław Sikorski to the governments of Belgium, Norway, the Czech Republic and Great Britain. Also important is the report of Antoni Balinski, the Polish representative, regarding Britain's attitude towards Ahmet Zog, which derives from his conversation with Pierson Dixon.

And at the very end, we also presented the report of a Polish officer who was part of the British mission in Albania, bringing important information about the political, economic and cultural situation in Albania after the capitulation of Italy. Polish reports on Albania during World War II are relatively limited, as Poland itself was involved in the major conflict in Europe and had its own national security priorities to attend to. However, there are several documents and reports of Polish diplomacy that mention the situation in Albania, which we have also addressed in this study.

Polish documents about Albania during the Second World War are important because of several factors:

1. **Historical Information:** Polish documents provide an important source of information about the history of Albania during the Second World War period. These documents contain analyses, diplomatic reports, and assessments of the situation in Albania, helping to understand historical developments.
2. **International Context:** Poland was one of the countries involved in the global conflict of the Second World War and had connections and interest in the events in the Balkan region and, in particular, in Albania. Polish documents provide an important perspective on international interactions and diplomacy of the time.
3. **Resource for Research and Analysis:** Polish documents are important resources for scholars and analysts interested in the history and diplomacy of the Balkans and Eastern Europe during World War II. These documents can be used to make in-depth analyzes of international relations and historical developments in the region.

For these reasons, Polish documents about Albania are important for understanding the historical context and diplomacy of the Second World War in the Balkan region.

## Zaključak

U periodu Drugog svjetskog rata (1939-1945) odnosi između Poljske i Albanije bili su pod uticajem tadašnjih dešavanja i opšte situacije u Evropi. Na Poljsku je izvršena invazija nacističke Njemačke u septembru 1939. godine, čime je započeo Drugi svjetski rat. U međuvremenu, Albanija je bila pod okupacijom fašističke Italije, koja je imala savez sa Njemačkom. U ovom periodu, zbog okupacije Poljske i raznih situacija u istočnoj Evropi, nije bilo mnogo zvaničnih odnosa između Poljske i Albanije. Albanija je bila više uključena u regionalna dešavanja i borbu protiv fašističkih osvajača, dok je Poljska bila uključena u Drugi svjetski rat kao jedan od saveznika savezničkih sila. Osim toga, zbog teške situacije i podjele kontrole teritorija od strane nacističkih i fašističkih osvajača, odnosi dvije zemlje nisu se razvili do nivoa ekspresne diplomatske saradnje. Međutim, bilo je pokušaja Albanaca da pomognu evakuaciju poljskih izbjeglica putevima Jugoslavije, u periodu njihove migracije iz okupirane Poljske.

Poljska diplomatija je imala poseban interes za Albaniju. Diplomacija poljske države je jedna od diplomatija koja je, nevezano za bilo kakav poseban interes, pratila situaciju u Albaniji. Poljski ambasador u Rimu, Wieniawa Długoszewski, izvještavao je o pripremama Italije za invaziju na Albaniju. Donosi nam i vrlo zanimljiv izvještaj iz razgovora sa grofom Cianom. Invazija Italije na Albaniju 7. aprila 1939. izazvala je interesovanje čak i u poljskoj štampi



tog vremena. U tom periodu objavljeni su brojni članci u novinama kao što su *Dziennik Polski*, *Dziennik Zachodni*, *Expres Zagłębia* itd. Veoma važan dokument je i pismo koje je Ahmet Zogu uputio poljskom premijeru u Londonu Władysławu Sikorskom, ističući da je Albanija prva žrtva fašističke agresije u Evropi. Ahmet Zogu je poslao slično pismo Władysławu Sikorskom vladama Belgije, Norveške, Češke i Velike Britanije. Važan je i izvještaj poljskog predstavnika Antonija Balinskog o britanskom odnosu prema Ahmetu Zogu, koji proizilazi iz njegovog razgovora sa Piersonom Dixonom.

I na samom kraju, predstavljen je i izvještaj poljskog oficira koji je bio dio britanske misije u Albaniji, donoseći važne informacije o političkoj, ekonomskoj i kulturnoj situaciji u Albaniji nakon kapitulacije Italije. Poljski izvještaji o Albaniji tokom Drugog svjetskog rata relativno su ograničeni, jer je i sama Poljska bila uključena u veliki sukob u Evropi i imala je svoje vlastite prioritete nacionalne sigurnosti kojima je trebalo voditi računa. Međutim, postoji nekoliko dokumenata i izvještaja poljske diplomatije koji pominju situaciju u Albaniji, o čemu smo se također bavili u ovoj studiji.

Poljski dokumenti o Albaniji tokom Drugog svjetskog rata važni su zbog nekoliko faktora:

1. Historijski podaci: Poljski dokumenti pružaju važan izvor informacija o historiji Albanije tokom perioda Drugog svjetskog rata. Ovi dokumenti sadrže analize, diplomatske izvještaje i procjene situacije u Albaniji, koji pomažu u razumijevanju historijskih događaja.
2. Međunarodni kontekst: Poljska je bila jedna od zemalja uključenih u globalni sukob Drugog svjetskog rata i imala je veze i interes za događaje u regionu Balkana, a posebno u Albaniji. Poljski dokumenti pružaju važnu perspektivu o međunarodnim interakcijama i diplomatiji tog vremena.
3. Resurs za istraživanje i analizu: Poljski dokumenti su važni izvori za naučnike i analitičare zainteresovane za historiju i diplomatiju Balkana i istočne Evrope tokom Drugog svjetskog rata. Ovi dokumenti se mogu koristiti za dubinske analize međunarodnih odnosa i historijskih dešavanja u regionu.

Iz ovih razloga, poljski dokumenti o Albaniji važni su za razumevanje historijskog konteksta i diplomatije Drugog svjetskog rata u regionu Balkana.

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