

Background Information on Ex-King Zog

1951

I. Personal History until World War II

1. The following summary of Zog's life until World War II was taken from Julian Amery's Sons of the Eagle, which information agrees factually with other general biographic data we have on Zog:

2. Ahmet Zog was born in 1895 of a family of Mati Beys with a long tradition of distinguished service to the Ottoman Empire. When Zog was still a boy, his grandfather, Jemal Pasha, conspired with Marshal Rejeb Pasha to create an independent Albanian kingdom from the ruins of the Turkish Empire in Europe. This conspiracy was uncovered and squelched by the Sultan, who poisoned the Marshal but forgave Zog's grandfather on condition that young Zog be sent to Istanbul as hostage for the grandfather's loyalty. The Sultan took a liking to the boy, and raised him at the Palace, and sent him ^{to} ~~at~~ Officers' School. On vacations Zog travelled widely but could not go back to Albania until after the Young Turk revolution. At that time Zog escaped to his home in the Mati through Macedonia. Upon his return, while still very young, he led his clansmen against the Serbs during the Balkan Wars. During the First World War, Zog and his followers fought with the Austrians, but Zog was so jealous of the national integrity of his men that one incident with the Austrians resulted in his being sent to virtual confinement in Vienna. Here again he was kindly received by the Emperor; the training he received at two Imperial courts belies ~~the~~ ^{any} ~~too common~~ notion that the ex-King ^{is} ~~was~~ simply an unschooled tribesman ~~with~~ ^{political acumen.} with ~~an~~ inexplicable ~~sense of politics.~~

3. ~~After~~ After the war Zog returned to Albania and set about reorganizing his faction in the north, whereupon he shortly became the strongest

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NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

single influence in the governments up to 1924. As a Gheg chieftain who relied mainly upon the strength of ~~his~~^{these} supporters for his power, he in return gave the Ghegs a large part of the fruits of this power. Opposition from the south~~th~~ was soon forth coming in a coalition of Bishop Fan Noli, Ali Klissura, and Mustafa Kryya, backed by the Tosk beys. This group succeeded in isolating Zog from his supporters; ~~and~~ in 1924 they seized power by insurrection and drove Zog across the border into Yugoslavia.

4. In Belgrade Zog was joined by the Kossovar Tsena Bey Kryeziu, ~~and together they~~^{with whom he} plotted a counter-revolution. In this they were aided by the Yugoslavs who saw an opportunity for increasing their influence in Albania by supplying Zog and Kryeziu with White Russian troops and arms. In December 1924, Zog and Tzena marched into Albania at the head of their Kossovar and White Russian troops. Their supporters rose in revolt; a fortnight later Zog occupied Tirana.

5. One of Zog's first concerns was to prevent a recurrence of his previous ousting. To do so he had to remove from places of responsibility the very men who had helped him regain power in Albania. Tsena Kryeziu, whose policies of closer ties with Yugoslavia were not in accord with Zog's arrangements with the Italians, was sent as Albanian Minister to Belgrade. There he may have been plotting another revolution against Zog; at any rate he was shot by a student who is considered to have been operating on indirect orders from Zog himself. Zog then broke the power of the quadrumvirate that had followed him to exile and that had been largely instrumental in establishing his new regime among the Ghegs -- Muharrem Bairaktar, Fikri Dine, Jemal Herri, and Prenk Previsi. They were replaced by new men more obedient ~~to~~,

as they were more dependent upon, Zog.

6. After successfully putting down all signs of internal revolution against his authority, Zog decided to make himself a constitutional monarch. This show of strength was belied, however, by the increasing demands made by Italy, which were finally climaxed by the invasion of the country and its incorporation into the Italian Empire. Before fleeing the country for Greece, Zog pledged to the National Assembly that he would legally represent Albania until its liberation. This he did during the Second World War; this he considers himself as still doing, inasmuch as the liberation has not yet occurred.

II. Relations of Zog with the United States concerning the Establishment of the National Committee for Free Albania

7. The first overtures indicating that both Zog and the U.S. might have some interest in common in the future of Albania were made to representatives of the Department of State and OSO by Abdyl Sula, Zog's minister in Egypt. These were done in Washington, September 1947. Sula's suggestions concerned primarily the provision of men to be infiltrated into Albania for purposes of spreading propaganda, of undertaking sabotage, and of collecting intelligence material. In return Zog asked that he be given official recognition as head of the Albanian government in exile, or unofficial recognition by the attachment of a U.S. officer to his staff. OSO was definitely not interested, as they considered Zog's group particularly insecure, and incapable of obtaining any information of value to them. The State Department was likewise not interested in Sula's proposal at that time.

8. Over a year later, in late 1948-early 1949, Sotir Martini, the Minister of the Royal Court of Albania sent a memo to Colonel Norman Fiske, the U.S. Military Attaché in Cairo, concerning the re-establishment of a democratic government in Albania. Following the receipt of the memo, Fiske discussed the proposal in person with Zog. Zog at this time was convinced of the instability of the Communist regime in Albania and felt that the time had come for him to effect his return with the aid of the United States. He thought he had supporters in Albania who would aid him in the counter-revolution if he could only have financial and material assistance for an expeditionary force of some 500 men. Zog envisaged organizing resistance in the mountains which, once begun, would need no further outside aid. The planning was not done in great detail. The official reaction of the U.S. to this new proposal is not known... It was about this time, however, that the idea of organizing resistance through an eventual exile committee must have taken root.

9. By spring, 1949, the State Department had sent Mr. Berry to contact certain Albanians in exile with the purpose of sounding them out concerning the composition and authority of a new national committee. On May 5, Mr. Berry spoke with ex-King Zog, stating the U.S. desire to support the formation of an Albanian anti-Communist Front. He said that the United States looked with favor on Frasherî as head of a possible committee, and that it was hoped Zog would concur with this choice to the point of endorsing the Front under Frasherî's leadership. Since the United States was aware of Zog's willingness to have the future government of Albania settled by a plebiscite, they asked nothing more than that he suspend his royal prerogatives until

the time for such a plebiscite should be at hand.

10. Zog replied that he was definitely in favor of a United Front against the Communists and that he would support such an organization led by Frasheri. He did ask that a Legitimist and a "person of Merit" from the BKI be also on the Committee, with all of the country's three religious groups represented therein. As for the question of suspending his royal prerogatives, this was not possible in that such action would jeopardize the positions of the royalist missions that were still recognized in the Near East. More important in his considerations was the fact that the exercise of his royal prerogatives was a duty enjoined upon him by the National Assembly in 1939. If these difficulties could be overcome, however, he would be only too happy to make a public declaration of his support of the committee whenever such a statement would be useful.

11. Mr. Berry, after communicating to Frasheri the information that the King would support his presidency, returned to Egypt to reach a more precise agreement with Zog. On 14 June, 1949, Zog stated his support of the proposed anti-Communist Front in the following terms:

a. The different exile groups must work together to unify all the Albanians abroad for the sake of those still within the country.

b. The future future of Albania would be settled by the will of the people, i.e. by plebiscite.

c. Zog undertook not to exercise his royal prerogatives against the United Front nor against the activities conducted by the Committee under Frasheri, on condition that these do not act against Albanian national aspirations. The object of the Committee must be the recovery of Albanian independence and its territorial integrity.

12. The following day, Zog produced conditional requirements to the above statement, which is dependent upon their fulfillment.

These were:

a. Since he, Zog, represented the only legal and legitimate government of Albania, all questions of primary interest must be brought to his attention by the Committee or if necessary by the competent American authorities.

b. During the transitory period after the defeat of the present Albanian government and the installation of a new democratically chosen one, he, Zog, would charge a neutral government to organize the preliminaries for the holding of a plebiscite.

c. He, Zog, had sanctioned Frasherri as President by reason of the entire confidence he had in the latter's patriotism. If Frasherri should resign or if other such unforeseeable incidents should occur, he, Zog, must be consulted. This was also true concerning changes in the composition of the Executive Committee.

13. Zog's signature is affixed to records of these conversations held with Mr. Berry; his position has since been that his conditions were not fulfilled according to decisions reached with the latter.

14. Not a week later Hussein Selmani, aide-de-camp to Zog, wrote a letter to a Mr. Clarke of the State Department reiterating Zog's entire confidence in the United States, as expressed in Zog's sanctioning of the forthcoming Committee ^{to be} composed of representatives ^{all} of the different parties ~~of the country~~. Selmani went on to make even more precise Zog's reservations concerning the Committee's competence, ^{which} ~~this~~ ^{competence} was to be of an essentially practical nature, ^{and} the power delegated to ~~it~~ ^{the Committee} should not imply a substitution for the ~~royal~~ authority

nor a diminution of its prerogatives. The King, while giving his support to the Executive Committee in the accomplishment of its mission (i.e. ^{regaining} Albania's rights) reserved the right to undertake any action which circumstances might dictate or which might seem to him advantageous to the national interests of Albania.

15. A month later Colonel Low saw Zog, at which time he presented the ex-King with the final list of the members of the NCF. Following this interview, on 22 July, 1949, Zog wrote a note in which he stated that the document concerning the exact composition of the Committee was in complete contradiction in form and substance with the decision taken after his meeting with Mr. Berry. The main point of contention seems to have been the representation of the different political parties. Since the Committee as it was set up represented ~~almost entirely~~ ^{to him almost solely} the BK, Zog would not declare himself publicly in favor of it. Zog insisted that he was still adhering to his decisions ~~as~~ contained in Berry's report, that is that the Front should include both the BKI and the Legalitet parties.

16. A letter from Ago Agaj to a Kossovar exile in Rome retells the story of this disagreement with a few additional details. The principal point of difference between Agaj's story and that of the record is that Agaj maintains Zog insisted on the representation of all four political parties, the BK, the BKI, the Legalitet, and the Kossovars. According to Agaj, Berry also asked Zog for names of people whom he would like included on the Committee. Zog's reply was Frasheri, Marka Gjoni, Verlaci, Koliqi, Zhafer Deva, Koco Muka, and Abas Kupi. If this is true, Berry dissuaded Zog from including them in the record inasmuch as nothing more specific is therein mentioned other than that the BK, Legalitet, and BKI (through a "person of Merit") should

be represented. According to Agaj, Zog was later presented with a list of the Executive and General Committees by three Englishmen and one American Colonel, (probably Colonel Low is meant). Zog was asked to submit his opinion, whereupon he called a meeting of some of the more important members of his entourage, including Agaj. The group, after some deliberation, told Zog not to recognize the Committee since it was not really representative, in that both the BKI and Kossovvar groups were excluded.

17. On August 30, 1949, Zog made a press statement through the Royal Albanian Legation in Cairo with only the most oblique reference to the NCFA, ~~as~~ the ^{reason for} ~~cause of~~ the statement. He called on all parties to "seek by common accord and by pacific means the realization of national unity." When the day of liberation comes, Zog as King, the only legal authority representing Albania, would demand a plebiscite under the auspices of the UN.

18. At approximately the same time, Zog withdrew his support from Abas Kupa, who remained on the Committee, theoretically continuing to represent Zog. From this time on Zog's principal interest has been to achieve the inclusion of the other parties in the NCFA, although he seems to have recently ~~not~~ up his relationship with Kupa in the interests of national unity.

19. In his interview with the United Press of October 21, 1949, Zog did not go out of his way to condemn the NCFA. As far as the Committee went, the question was so worded that Zog was asked his opinion concerning a possible government-in-exile. Zog recognized the fact that any organization of this sort needed the help of the western powers, but he again maintained that no ~~new~~ committee so set up should

contravene Albanian constitutional law, inasmuch as the national constitution is, according to him, still juridically in force.

20. The latest interview that Zog has given the press occurred about ~~March~~ 28, 1951. This was an interview with the Cairo correspondent of the Greek periodical "Vima", in which Zog made every effort to show his pacific sentiments towards Yugoslavia, and particularly towards Greece. He made the comparison between ~~Greece's~~ ^{the} past difficulties that ~~she~~ ^{Greece} overcame, and those that Albania is now experiencing, difficulties that give them a common bond in their desire to resist Soviet Communism. He spoke specifically of the NCFA, which must cease its "fratricidal disputes" to achieve national union.

21. As for the touchy border problems that Albanians must face, Zog stated that despite the 800,000 Albanians now living in the Kossovo area, the question should not arouse feelings prejudicial to good relations with Yugoslavia. The Northern Epirus question was not mentioned directly, but Zog seemed to feel certain that the common traditions of bravery and freedom in their struggle against the Communist bandits would bring a deeper understanding between Albania and Greece.

22. In conclusion it can certainly be said that Zog has exercised considerable restraint in not attacking the NCFA more vigorously, since he feels it is not organized in the manner he agreed upon with Berry. Instead of adding to the conflicts that exist between the Albanian exiles, his voice has been fairly calm, asking only for enough unity to make a committee that would be capable of effecting an anti-Communist revolt in Albania. Zog undoubtedly realized, however, that his own political strength declines in direct relation

to the degree that the Albanian exiles are split into warring factions, and that it increases in proportion to the unity of purpose and action the exiles are able to effect. Only when the exiles are more unified titular can he leave the role of/leader of one of many political groups.

Playing on the various themes of national sovereignty, he could then create the impression that he is the only man in whom all political differences are reconciled, the only man in whom the legal existence of Albania continues.