



## Prince Wied and the Political-Legal Stability of Albania

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### Abstract

*This paper addresses the internal stability of Albania during the reign of Prince Wied. It focuses on the riots that took place in southern and central Albania during the period April-August 1914. The paper describes the internal situation and the tools the government used to stabilize it. It focuses on the policy pursued by the Durres government to put an end to the uprisings in the South and in Central Albania and the reasons for its failure to achieve such success. The paper is based mainly on authors who have written about the period of Wied's rule. It is with descriptive nature without elements of statistical or deductive analysis. Through analytical description, light is shed on the aspects of this broad and multifaceted issue.*

**Keywords:** Prince Wied, the Greek riots in the South of Albania, the rebellion of Central Albania

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The election of Vid as Prince of Albania

The Great Powers left the issue of electing the prince in the hands of the two Adriatic powers. Italy first proposed Prince Ahmed Fuad, from the Albanian dynasty of Egypt, who had studied in military schools in Italy and was pro-Italian. The candidacy was nominated by several candidates from European dynasties. The other candidate was Prince Gjika from the Albanian dynasty Gjika, who ruled Romania and Moldova for several centuries, but was not accepted by the Adriatic powers. The candidacy was also put forward by the Albanian Minister of War in the Ottoman Empire, Izet Pasha, who was also supported by Ismail Qemali, but in no way did Austria want a prince with an eastern political culture for Albania. Several candidacies from the two Adriatic powers were discussed and consensus reached on German Prince Wied. On 23 October 1913, Wied agreed to take the throne of Albania, but with certain conditions. Wied stated that<sup>1</sup>: *I decided to accept the candidacy for the throne of Albania under these conditions:*

1. The approval of the Albanian nation, through the body of the provisional government.
2. Guarantee that Esat Pasha recognizes the will of the Great Powers and submits to the will of the interim government, in connection with the election.
3. The Great Powers, or part of them, guarantee a loan of 75 million francs, which can be repaid in installments. The prince received 20 thousand francs, to be repaid by the loan.
4. The promise that the extension of the ICC could be shortened, if the administration of Albania would provide sufficient guarantees in this regard.
5. Albania's project-organization shall be approved by the prince and the parliamentary system cannot be accepted.
6. The royal house is exempt from taxes.
7. The border of Southern Albania at the main points shall be defined, so as to exclude any dispute.

Since the article of the London protocol regarding the organization of Albania stipulates that the prince would be

<sup>1</sup> Elena Kocaqi, *Wilhem Wied – German Prince of Albania, Emal, Tirana, 2015*

appointed by the six Great Powers, their consent for my candidacy must be obtained first, because it is necessary to make sure in advance that it will not encounter obstacles on the part of some cabinets.

Meanwhile, Prince Wied was still reluctant to come to Albania, because he wanted a loan guarantee that would be granted to the Albanian state. Austria-Hungary and Italy agreed that they would be ready to take over the guarantee alone and thus the Albanian loan of 75 million francs could be considered insured.

Throughout the month of February he went to the major capitals of Europe to get their support. After this trip, as requested by Prince Wied, an Albanian delegation prepared and went to give him the crown of Albania. On 21 February 1914, Esat Pasha headed a representation of Albanian nobles in Newvid to offer Wied the throne.<sup>2</sup> After his coronation, Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, suggested that Wied shall avoid any delay in his departure plan, in order to reach Albania as soon as possible and take the reins of government. Wied departed from Trieste on 5 March on an Austro-Hungarian ship, the "Taurus", accompanied by an international team consisting of ships from France, England and Italy. Prince Wied arrived in Albania on 7 March 1914.

After taking the throne of Albania according to the rules and procedures of the western type, formed the new cabinet and the Organic Status of Albania, which is the First Constitution of independent Albania, a constitution that was elaborated by the Audit Commission composed of envoys to the six Great Powers, which were also the guarantors that would guarantee the independence and neutrality of Albania. This Constitution declared Albania a Sovereign and inherited Principality. Status gave the prince broad power and significantly limited other powers but this was a legal tradition throughout Europe at a time when the sovereign was trying to prevail over other powers.

The government had Turhan Pasha as prime minister, who was once President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Esat Pasha was Minister of Interior and War. Aziz Pashe Vrioni was Minister of Agriculture and Mining, Myfit bej Libohova was Minister of Justice, Hasan bej Prishtina Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Prenk Bibe Doda Minister of Public Works. Doc. F. Adhamidhi Minister of Finance, while Doc. Turtull Beu became Minister of Public Education and Health. Since the Prince was chosen by agreement, he would gather around himself advisers of the Great Powers, who would begin the contest between them over who would have the greatest influence on the prince. In his government two currents arose, one pro-Italian and the other pro-Austrian, so that all members of his cabinet would be divided into two camps. His power rested solely on the outside will of the Great Powers and on their de facto presence through members of the ICC.

## **2. Wied and the Rebellion in the South of Albania**

Less than two months after Prince Wied came into power, the first disputes arose in his rule. These disputes took place, between Albanian political personalities and foreign advisers, as well as between the administration and the various segments of the population that expected rapid change in the country.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the country there was a territorial extension of political and military actions, especially the intervention of the Greek military forces in the so-called Northern Epirus, which brought serious problems for the newly created Albanian state. The challenge for Prince Wied's government was to maintain the boundaries set by the Conference of Ambassadors in London.

The new government faced anarchy in the South from the beginning. Greece had vowed to withdraw its forces from southern Albania, but continued negotiations with its military and politicians in order to make southern Albania autonomous and then appropriate. This undoubtedly caused instability and anarchy in southern Albania. During this time Southern Albania was under the control of regular Greek troops operating on the ground with masks and threats to the Albanian population. These troops expelled the Muslim population from the South of Albania which gathered in the olive groves of Vlora and undertook a number of massacres on it, where the number of dead went to thousands. Streets filled with naked bodies of women all with signs of suffocation, and small babies literally cut with knives, in order to annihilate all the inhabitants.<sup>4</sup>

In February, before the arrival of Wied, the Greek government, together with the so-called Epirotes, declared the independence of Northern Epirus with the former Prime Minister of Greece, Zeografos, as Prime Minister. The Epirote movement was fabricated by Greece and had more than moral support from the Greek Government. Many of the rebels killed or captured were wearing Greek uniforms with no insignia. In most cases it was also said that the weapons had

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<sup>2</sup>Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians, A modern history*, New York 2008, p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Ilirijana p. 31

<sup>4</sup>Joseph, *Albania the establishment of a kingdom*, Dituria, Tirana 2005 p. 189.

been given to them by the Greek government.<sup>5</sup> In order to get rid of the Albanian people with the intention of repopulating Southern Albania with Greeks, Zografi and his government ordered their gangs to burn the entire region from Tepelenë to Korçë.<sup>6</sup> The government of Durrës was not able to protect the lives of its citizens in the South of the country and could not intervene militarily, as the Greek government had threatened that any regular military action by the Albanian government would lead to a war with Greece. The intervention of Italy and Austria-Hungary would probably follow the outbreak of a European war.<sup>7</sup>

On 9 March, the Prince appointed Dutch Colonel Thomson, for talks with the Epirotes. His competence was to listen to the proposals that would be made, on behalf of the Wied government. Karapano demanded of Thomson on 15 March 1914, autonomy. In Wied status, the borders of Albania set by the Great Powers could not change. Thomson was fired and talks with Zeografo were interrupted.<sup>8</sup> He was accused of exceeding the mandate. The Durrës Cabinet rejected Thomson's talks with Greece on the grounds that the full powers given to Major Thomson by the Prince referred only to the manner in which the southern provinces were taken over and the measures known to be taken to maintain public order and peace therein, as they had been taken from him and did not in any way give him the power to negotiate with official and unofficial Greek authorities regarding the terms of a political character.

Vienna suggested that talks with the Greeks begin, and if the talks did not yield results, the Prince and the government were obliged to end it by force.<sup>9</sup> Seeing that a military operation was dangerous, Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister Berchtold requested the consul in Durrës to suggest to the Albanian Prime Minister, in return for following the line of direct talks, to ask the KNK for the role of mediator and to give him authorization for reconciliation.<sup>10</sup> Talks began between the Albanian government and the Epirotes under the assistance and mediation of the ICC. On 17 May 1914, an agreement was reached, which violated the sovereignty of Albania but also the decisions taken in London, as it gave substantial autonomy to some regions of Southern Albania inhabited by Albanians. This agreement had to be approved in order to enter into force *ad referendum*. It would enter into force only after acceptance on the one hand by the Albanian government and the governments of the Great Powers and on the other hand by the Assembly of Epirus.<sup>11</sup> On 17 May 1914, the Corfu Protocol was signed. The provisions of this protocol legally allowed the creation of an autonomous zone in the south of the country which according to the Greek state was inhabited by minorities. Albania did not immediately ratify the Corfu Protocol in the hope that the situation in southern Albania would improve. Its ratification took place on 23 June 1923, this action, prompted by the pressure of the International Control Commission, forced the Albanian government to make concessions.<sup>12</sup>

On 1 July 1914, the Greek government received the note of the Great Powers, by which it was informed that the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy and Russia had approved the agreement reached in Corfu by the KNK and the delegates of Epirus, regarding the future status of Epirus.<sup>13</sup> The Epirotes demanded constitutional and international guarantees for the implementation of eventual commitments undertaken by the Great Powers.<sup>14</sup> On 7 August the Epirotes accepted the Corfu Protocol.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. The Rebellion of Middle Albania

Although the Albanian government accepted the Corfu agreement, it later disagreed and sought to suppress the uprising by force. Colonel Thomson, who commanded the Dutch troops in Albania, thought that this issue would be resolved through negotiations and not through war, but Esat Pasha assured the prince that they would suppress the uprising with

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<sup>5</sup>Heaton, *Six months of reign, 1914 (Memories)*, Tirana Onufri 2001

<sup>6</sup>Joseph, *Albania the establishment of a kingdom, Dituria, Tirana 2005 p. 186.*

<sup>7</sup>*In that as well*, p. 172.

<sup>8</sup>Ledia Dushku, *when history divided two neighboring peoples, Albania and Greece 1912-1914, Tirana 2012, p. 270.*

<sup>9</sup>*There as well*, p. 274.

<sup>10</sup>*There as well* p. 277.

<sup>11</sup>*There as well*, p. 313.

<sup>12</sup>Iliriana Kaceli, *Albanian-Turkish Relations 1912-1939, UET, Faculty of History and Philology, Tirana 2014, p. 32.*

<sup>13</sup>Ledia Dushku, *When history divided two neighboring peoples, Albania and Greece 1912-1914, Tirana 2012, p. 335*

<sup>14</sup>*There as well*, p. 336.

<sup>15</sup>*There as well*, p. 341.

weapons. Esat called for volunteers and the rifles bought from Italy were transported inland and distributed.<sup>16</sup> As King Wied's secretary Armstrong testified, a long caravan of horses left Durrës and went inland, loaded with rifles and large quantities of ammunition. Weapons and ammunition were not yet well distributed when word came that the men we had armed were unanimously refusing to march south.<sup>17</sup>

Assad, used the incomplete knowledge that Prince Wied had about our country, and, under the pretext that he was sending troops to fight against Greece, distributed weapons in the province of Durres, Elbasan and Central Albania. Esad Pasha through his agents spread hatred and resentment among the people against the prince and kindled the fire for the arrival of a Turkish prince under whom he himself hides.<sup>18</sup> Thus the rebels armed with state weapons returned their weapons to him. In the south, the barbarism of the Greeks was raging furiously, in Durrës it was discovered that the weapons he had distributed were not for the war against the Greeks - because he and Varatas (the Greek ambassador in Durres) had agreed to arm his supporters in the middle Albania. This was a new test that showed that he did not work for either Albania or its independence. According to the secret agreement with the Serbs - he wanted a piece of land, Central Albania where he himself would be Prince and Bey.<sup>19</sup>

On 17 May when the government forces' unit headed south was attacked by groups of armed villagers, marking the beginning of a rebellion in central Albania. The uprising started in Shijak and later spread to the districts of Durrës and Elbasan. Esad Pasha Toptani, despite holding ministerial positions in Turhan Pasha's cabinet, began to develop his propaganda in early May.<sup>20</sup> A military group led by a Dutch captain, Saar, went to deal with the rebels but failed to persuade them. Alarmed by the gunmen he ordered fire to be opened against them where there were also killed, this irritated the people who marched towards Shijak to help the rebels against the government forces. The march to Shijak on 17 May was a comedy tuned between the Young Turks and Esat Pasha, who was in the service of Serbia and in contact with Greece through his brother-in-law Hamdi Bey, a blind instrument of the Metropolitan of Durrës. The successful realization of this coup would provide Serbia, Greece and Montenegro with significant territorial benefits, while the Albanian minister would assist the neighboring countries for his rule in Central Albania.<sup>21</sup>

Suspicious about the uprising fell directly on Esat Toptan, as it had been his idea to arm Central Albania, and he was the one who organized this armament. The Austro-Hungarian agents sought to convince the prince himself that Esat Pasha was plotting against him, and that he was the one who had instigated the revolt.<sup>22</sup> Seeing that the prince was wavering and not being persuaded for lack of evidence, to take legal action against his Minister of the Interior and War, to remove him from office, the Austrians hastened to organize with the help of the princess and court marshal Fon Trota and Dutch gendarmerie officer Slujs, the 19 May morning coup against Esat Toptani.<sup>23</sup> As he intended to resist, cannons fired by Austrian officers fired several shells at the minister's house, forcing him to surrender.<sup>24</sup> Armstrong recalls that Esat, who apparently knew what awaited him, was not at all surprised when I told him that he was under arrest and had to come with us to the pier, where he would be handed over to the commander of the Austrian ship.<sup>25</sup> Esat with the Italian intervention left the asylum without trial. Wied wrote in his memoirs that "it seemed unfair to bring him to trial, on the basis of oral statements, the truth of which could not be proved without leaving doubts. In addition, Esat immediately fell into the hands of Italy, which quickly promised to protect it."<sup>26</sup>

Toptan's fall not only worsened the situation inside the country, but also Austro-Hungarian relations with Italy, as the latter blamed Austria for the incident. Italy thought that Wilhelm Weid was pro-Austrian, so it selected Esat Pasha as an instrument of its policy, trying to raise him and bring Prince Wihelm down before the Albanian people.<sup>27</sup> The glorious end of Prince Wied wanted for her expansionist accounts, the government of Rome which pushed her, to caress Esat

<sup>16</sup>Joseph, *Albania the establishment of a kingdom, Dituria, Tirana 2005* p. 172.

<sup>17</sup>Heaton, *Six months of reign, 1914 (Memories), Tirana Onufri 2001*, p.64

<sup>18</sup>Ijiriana Kaceli, *Albanian-Turkish Relations 1912-1939, UET, Faculty of History and Philology, Tirana 2014*, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup>There as well

<sup>20</sup>There as well

<sup>21</sup>There as well

<sup>22</sup>Gazmend Shpuza, *The Peasant Uprising of Middle Albania 1914-1915, Tirana 1986*, p. 103.

<sup>23</sup>There as well, p. 103.

<sup>24</sup>There as well, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup>Heaton, *Six months of reign, 1914 (Memories), Tirana Onufri 2001*, p.80.

<sup>26</sup>Wilhelm Wied, *Memorandum on Albania, Tirana 2008*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup>Joseph Swire, *Albania the establishment of a kingdom, Dituria, Tirana 2005*, p. 167.

Pasha's ambition for power.<sup>28</sup> The rivalry between them led to the division of the government into two opposing blocs, one bloc with Prince Wied was oriented from Vienna, joined by many patriots, who saw the salvation of Albania in those conditions in strengthening Wied's authority. Among them were Dervish Hima, Hasan Prishtina, Bajram Curri and Isa Buletini. The other bloc was led by Esat Toptani, who now counted on becoming ruler with the help of Rome.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile the insurgents demanded;

1. Restoration of Ottoman rule, or in case this failed, the appointment of a member of the Ottoman imperial family as prince of Albania.
2. If the Albanian language was to be used at any level, then only Arabic letters shall be used to write it, while the free use of Turkish shall be allowed for a period of 8 years.
3. The Chief Mufti of Albania shall be appointed by she-ul-Islami and their spiritual presidents of other religious communities by their respective presidents in Constantinople
4. The Albanian flag must hold crescent<sup>30</sup>
5. In Shijak to the International was requested.
6. The greatest expansion of the teaching of religion.
7. Restoration of Ottoman rule.
8. If that was impossible then a European reaction.

While Kavaja demanded that the sovran of Albania to raise religious teaching again. They complained that the people the sovereign held in power were some men who had long persecuted and were persecuting the people. According to them, the government had used cannons against them, which has seriously shaken security and public trust. Consequently they wanted rule by the Ottoman Empire. But if this were impossible to achieve they sought the power of the Great Powers.<sup>31</sup>

In order to maintain Vid's position in Durrës, a plan was made to recruit fighters from Northern Albania. Thus, Bib Doda would arrive from Lezhe with 5 thousand men, Ahmet Zogu with 2000, Berat, Elbasan, Vlorë with 1500.<sup>32</sup> The government of Durrës threw a lot of money to set up an army that would suppress the rebellion of Central Albania and the issue of the south of the country was left out of the solution. The troops paid by the prince did not reach their destination, only a few Catholic mercenaries arrived and the Kosovos troops defended the city to some extent. Volunteers from Italy, Austria and Romania even came to hold the position of prince in Durrës. The prince demanded the arrival of international troops, which Italy and Austria agreed on, but the other major powers, which did not want to invest in Albania in terms of order and security, did not agree. Russia did not want a stability of Albania, while for England Albania did not match its interests in Europe. France was in alliance with Russia and Italy did not want Wied's success as it viewed him as a pro-Austrian. The prince's prayers for an international body were rejected.

During the month of June in Durrës, Colonel Thomson, who was the commander of the city, was killed and after this murder, the prince was more insecure. During July, attempts were made to change the cabinet and Prime Minister Turhan Pasha traveled to the West, but the world was on the brink of World War I after the assassination of Austria's crown prince. On 25 July the prince went to Vlorë, where he was very well received. This trip seemed to give the prince hope to improve his position, but he was attacked both internally and externally by the Balkan powers and their powerful allies, who did not want the existence of an Albanian state.

The outbreak of war left the Prince with no choice but to leave Albania as he did not even have the financial means to stay. These means would secure precisely the great powers which had begun the war against one another. On 3 September 1914, Wied issued a statement saying: *Albanians, when your delegates came to me and offered me the crown of Albania, I confidently responded to the call of a brave and noble nation, asking me to help it in the work of national salvation. I came inspired by an ardent desire to help in this patriotic work. You have seen me do my best from the beginning to organize your country, and try to give you a good government. But the war that has erupted in Europe has added to the complexity of our position. In these circumstances I judged not to leave unfinished the work to which I had decided to devote all my strength and life, working for the advancement of your noble homeland.*<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Muin Çami, *Albania in the course of history 1912-1924*, Tirana Onufri 2007, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup>Kristaq Prifti, *Dervish Hima*, Tirana 1993, p. 238.

<sup>30</sup>British Documents for Albania and Albanians, January-December 1914, Prepared by Valentina Duka, Tirana Toena 2012, no. 185, p. 488-489

<sup>31</sup>There as well p. 277.

<sup>32</sup>Heaton Armstrong, *Six months of reign, 1914 (Memories)*, Tirana Onufri 2001, p. 106.

<sup>33</sup>Joseph Swire, *Albania the establishment of a kingdom, Dituria*, Tirana 2005, p. 192.

Prince Wied was sabotaged and attacked by all, both by the Balkan states but also by the Great Powers. It was only Austria-Hungary that wanted an Albanian state and worked sincerely for it, while Italy played a dual role. The German Kaiser, in relation to Wied, has stated that, "To me it is especially embarrassing for a German prince to make himself a fool there. It was clear from the beginning that the Entente would put up all sorts of obstacles in its path."<sup>34</sup> According to the German Kaiser, Wied lacked the skills and experience, qualities necessary for the sovereign of a new state.<sup>35</sup> Armstrong has stated that, the Great Powers never wanted the success of the Kingdom and I have the impression that, some of them were hostile from the beginning, though they did not express it. It is certain that the Austrians intrigued for power, but at least they had no claim to Albanian territory, like the Italians, Greeks, Serbs and Montenegrins. They wanted an independent and strong Albania, to sympathize with the Austrian Empire, and to be a useful anti-Serb ally in case of war. For this reason, they tried with all their might to support the king. I believe the Austrians were the only true friends. England and Germany were completely uninterested, while the rest was against us.<sup>36</sup> Even for Swire between the Great Powers, only Austria-Hungary tried to fully fulfill its obligations to Albania.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

Albania's internal stability during the reign of Prince Wied was not only delicate but anarchic as the Great Powers did not find a solution to the problem of the South of the country which became the cause of all the political instability in the country. The negotiations of the Minister of Interior to gain ground and reputation in the country disturbed the whole fragile situation, destabilizing Central Albania. Now before the government was not only the problem of Epirus but also the problem of the rebellion of Central Albania that was at the gates of Durres and threatened to make it impossible to keep the prince in Durres. The government tried to pay considerable sums to local Albanian feudal lords to set up an army to defend its position but this did not work as they failed in their negotiations. The prince was abandoned by the Great Powers as Austria, which supported him, went to war. Wied also had no internal support as Balkan influences on the local elite also affected the country's instability. The local feudal elite aspired to its local power and was not interested in strengthening the central government as it knew that its power over the local population would be weakened. The local nationalist and intellectual elite was powerless as it was far from economic and political power. Prince Wied was facing anarchy and internal hostility from the clans that really ruled the country but also from a hostility of the Balkan Powers towards him, which was directed against the existence of Albania. The Great Powers except Austria-Hungary were not sincerely interested in the stability of Albania as they supported the interests of their allies in the Balkans. On the other hand, the Ottoman heritage in Albania was still very strong and it became an obstacle for the orientation of Albania towards the West. The arrival in Aryan of a German prince was a great chance for Albania to break away from the Ottoman political heritage but also to establish a modern state and to cut the way of the Balkan claims to the Albanian state, but which unfortunately failed to be used.

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<sup>34</sup>There as well, p. 166.

<sup>35</sup>Ledia Dushku, When history divided two neighboring peoples, Albania and Greece 1912-1914, Tirana 2012, p. 246

<sup>36</sup>Heaton Armstrong, Six months of reign, 1914 (Memories), Tirana Onufri 2001, p. 195.

<sup>37</sup>Joseph Swire, Albania the establishment of a kingdom, Dituria, Tirana 2005, p. 167.