

ITALY, ALBANIA, AND YUGO-SLAVIA

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THE history of modern Albania, as a separate international entity, dates only from the time of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. When the Powers met in the Conference of London in the autumn of 1913, to settle the many questions raised by the defeat of Turkey at the hands of the allied Christian States of the Balkans, they decided upon the erection of Albania into a separate kingdom. In December, Prince William of Wied was elected to fill the new throne, and an International Commission was appointed to assist him. It proved difficult, however, to persuade the Greeks to accept the southern frontier of the new State as delimited by the Powers in the Protocol of Florence (December, 1913), and the Powers were still trying to effect a settlement when the Great War supervened. Within one month of its outbreak the puppet Albanian monarchy, the creature of Austrian diplomacy, was overthrown.

During the four years 1914-18, Albania was the scene of successive military advances, occupations, and withdrawals, according as the fortunes of war in the Balkans swayed back and forth. In 1914 the Greeks occupied Southern Albania and laid hands on Koritsa. The Italians seized Valona and the strategically important island of Saseno, and in the next year pushed on to Argirokastro, Janina, and Santi-Quaranta. In 1915 the country was traversed by the retreating Serbs, and on their heels, in 1916, came the Austro-Bulgar advance and an organized Austrian occupation. In 1917, however, the French cleared the Santi-Quaranta route and then joined with the Italians to form an Allied "Albanian front," so that when the Austrian resistance collapsed in 1918, Albania was in a state of mixed military occupation by Italians, French and Serbs.

Italy's interest in Albania was of at least 30 years standing. Even when she was still a member of the Triple Alliance, she had begun to pay more and more attention to Balkan and Adriatic affairs, and in proportion as her policy became increasingly concerned with these new interests, her relations with her Austrian ally became more and more watchful and suspicious. As early as 1887 the two Powers felt it necessary to define their mutual interests

in the Balkans. By an arrangement in February of that year they agreed to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans, the coasts of the Adriatic, and the Aegean. If events made this impossible, and either Power was driven to a temporary or permanent occupation of territory in this area, it was to be preceded by joint agreement on a basis of mutual compensation. Ten years later, in November, 1897, Goluchowski and Visconti Venosta reached a special verbal agreement (confirmed by a formal exchange of notes in December, 1900) touching Albania in particular. Both Powers declared their complete territorial "désintéressement" in Albania, and pronounced in favour of Albanian autonomy.

These two agreements governed Austro-Italian relations in the Balkans down to 1914. When Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, one reason for her evacuation of the Sanjak was to forestall any Italian claim for compensation under the arrangement of 1887. Similarly, during the Turco-Italian war of 1911-12 the Austrian Foreign Minister, Aerenthal, opposed any Italian naval action at Salonica, or any Italian occupation of the Aegean islands, as a disturbance of that Balkan *status quo* which both were pledged to preserve. On the other hand, when in May, 1912, Italy seized the Dodecanese and continued to hold them, Berchtold, Aerenthal's successor, raised no objection. It seems clear that this unusual complaisance was due to a fear of offending his Italian ally at a time when a strong party in Austria was already contemplating war on Serbia as a result of the outcome of the first Balkan War of 1912. For it is here that we meet the third party to the Adriatic triangle, the Southern Slavs. While Italy was moving towards the policy of 1915, when Sonnino was to make it a condition of her joining the Entente that she should be given such concessions as would free her for ever from Austrian or any other domination in the Adriatic and its shores, the Southern Slavs were planning the disruption of Austria and the pursuit at her expense of ideals and ambitions which were only too likely to collide with those of Italy. In other words, it was certain that if and when Austria's control of the Adriatic and its coasts disappeared, there would be two claimants to succeed her.

This was clearly foreshadowed by the events of 1912-13. In the course of the first Balkan War against Turkey, the Montenegrins laid siege to Scutari in Northern Albania, the Serbs reached Durazzo in Central Albania, and the Greeks overran Southern Albania. These gains by the Serbs and Montenegrins were highly unpalatable to Vienna, and in the winter of 1912-13 she was only deterred from taking separate action, firstly by the restraining hand of Berlin, and secondly by an agreement of the Powers to enforce a naval

blockade to compel the Slavs to leave Scutari. At the height of the crisis Austria mooted a temporary occupation of Montenegro, but Italy declared that such an occupation would disturb the Balkan balance, and asked for the Albanian ports of Durazzo and Valona as compensation. The second Balkan War of 1913 again brought Austro-Serb friction to a crisis, this time over the Albanian frontier, and on this occasion Italy supported Austria on the significant ground that in Albanian affairs the two Powers could not afford to act separately. In short, by 1914 it was abundantly clear that Italy was ready to co-operate with Austria to forbid the Eastern coast of the Adriatic to the insurgent Slavs who were disrupting Turkey, but also that she was equally determined not to see Austria installed there.

Her acute concern with Balkan affairs was fully realized by statesmen on both sides at the time of the outbreak of the Great War. It was a well-grounded fear that if Rome was given any inkling of the nature of the Austrian demands on Serbia she would demand substantial compensation in Albania, which led Germany and Austria to leave her in ignorance of what was being done until 16 hours after the Austrian Note had been delivered at Belgrade. Italy naturally protested against such an attempt to modify the Balkan situation without consulting her interests. She pointed out that it was a double breach of Austria's obligations. It was a threat to the *status quo* which Austria was pledged to uphold, and it was made without that previous agreement with Italy which had been expressly stipulated. In these circumstances, Italy could accept no responsibility for any European complications which might follow, and, as is well known, she proceeded to separate herself from her Allies and proclaim her neutrality.

Finally, just as friction over Balkan questions had led to a breach between Italy and the Central Powers, so it helped to delay her adhesion to the Entente. It is now known that when the terms upon which Italy was ready to join the Entente were submitted to London in March, 1915, Russia, as the patron and champion of Serbia, showed grave alarm at their extent. Sazonoff, Russian Foreign Minister, argued that if the Italian demands were conceded in full they would entail the certainty of future conflict with the Southern Slavs. He pointed out that one root cause of the war was Austria's constant effort to curb the development of Serbia by refusing her access to the Adriatic, and that there could be no hope of permanent peace if Italy were simply to take over Austria's rôle in this respect. In his opinion it was desirable to delimit the Serbian and Montenegrin claims on the Adriatic coast before conceding those of Italy, which he regarded as likely to

outweigh the moral or material value of her alliance. In these negotiations, and in the advice of Izvolsky, Russian Ambassador at Paris, where he was urging on the French Government the advantages of dismembering Austria-Hungary and setting up a strong Serbo-Croat State including Istria and Dalmatia, as a counterpoise to Italy and Hungary, the lines of the present alignment of the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe leap immediately to light. The pressure of military need, however, was too urgent to let the Entente give heed to Sazonoff's warnings, and in the secret Convention of London, of April, 1915, the bulk of Italy's claims were conceded.

In so far as they applied to Albania, the terms of this treaty were as follows: The coast from a point south of Ragusa Vecchia to the mouth of the Viossa was to be neutralized, but with reservation of the rights granted to Montenegro in 1909. Italy was to have Saseno and Valona, with a sufficient hinterland to make the port defensible. The coast between this area under Italian sovereignty and Cape Stylos was to be neutralized. The Serbo-Montenegrins and the Greeks were allotted various gains in Northern and Southern Albania respectively, and what was left when all these claims had been met was to be constituted a small, autonomous, neutralized Moslem state with Durazzo for its port, and the direction of its foreign policy committed to Italian safe-keeping.

This, then, was the settlement which Italy hoped to see confirmed on the morrow of the war. Soon after the Armistice, in November, 1918, a body of delegates from Central Albania met at Tirana and decided to invite the country to elect a National Assembly. Italy promptly organized a rival assembly at Durazzo, from which she apparently planned to obtain the appointment of an Executive Commission which she might hope to influence. In this she was disappointed, for on December 15th the Durazzo Assembly proclaimed a Provisional Government under Turhan Pasha, formerly chief minister under William of Wied. For the moment, however, Albania's future seemed likely to be determined neither at Tirana nor at Durazzo, but at the Peace Conference in Paris, where the Albanian question was only one aspect of the whole Serbo-Italian conflict for the right to inherit the old Austrian command of the Adriatic. In any case, with her territory occupied by various foreign contingents, her frontiers undetermined, and her inhabitants hopelessly divided as to what régime they wished to see installed,¹ Albania was in no position to make herself heard. All the efforts at a settlement made by the Powers in 1919-20 failed, the Serbs

1. While delegates from Durazzo were pressing the Nationalist claims on the Peace Conference, Doukadjine Zadeh, in the name of the Albanian Moslems, was asking for a Turkish occupation under a French general.

arguing for an independent Albania with the frontiers of 1913, and the Italians and Greeks, linked by the Venizelos-Tittoni agreement, looking to a policy of partition.

In the meantime, general irritation with the proceedings of the Powers and its own alleged complaisance to Italy¹ had led to the fall of the provisional Turhan Government. Between January 21st and February 9th, 1920, 56 deputies sat at Lushnja under the presidency of Akif pasha Elbassani and under the protection of a force of volunteers. They set up a Regency of four, (one for each of the Albanian religious cults) which was to exercise supreme authority until a sovereign should have been chosen; they declared the Turhan Cabinet replaced by one under Suleiman bey Delvino; they decreed the calling of a "parliament" of 30 chosen from their own number; and they protested against the setting up of any foreign protectorate or mandate, and against any decision prejudicial to Albanian integrity or independence. The "parliament" thus recruited from this Lushnja meeting duly sat at Tirana from March to December, 1920.

Meanwhile, anti-Italian feeling had assumed the proportions of open insurrection. In the course of 1920 the Italians were driven in on Valona, and by the late summer were glad to negotiate. Accordingly, by the agreement of August 2nd, Italy recognized Albanian independence and accepted the Government at Tirana as the national Government, and at the same time renounced her occupation of Valona. In return she received the right to occupy Saseno, the right to use the Bay of Valona as a base and shelter for her shipping, and the right to enter into agreements for the exploitation of minerals in Albania. Compensation for this partial Italian failure was not, however, long delayed. Albanian resistance to the Greek occupation of Koritsa and Argirokastro in the South, and repeated frontier incidents with the Serbs to the North, continued to exercise the attention of the Powers until late in 1921, but in November of that year a settlement was finally reached. On November 9th, the Conference of Ambassadors of the Powers finally declared in favour of an independent Albania with the frontiers of 1913. It was agreed, however, that if Albania found herself unable to maintain her territorial integrity, she should have the right to appeal to the Council of the League of Nations² for foreign help, and that in that case the four Powers would recommend that the task of restoring Albania's frontiers should be entrusted to Italy. In the event of any threat to the territorial or economic

1. e.g. In the convention of August, 1919, which permitted Italy to maintain a High Commissioner at Durazzo.

2. Albania had been admitted to the League in December, 1920,—i.e. before there was strictly any recognized Albania to be admitted.

independence or integrity of the country, the Powers reserved the right to make this same recommendation even if Albania failed to appeal to the League. Lastly, it was agreed that any modification of the frontiers or the integrity of the new State should be recognized as a danger to Italian security. In short, if Italy had failed to secure the protectorate over Albania for which she had originally hoped, she had some compensation in that she now held an especially privileged position in the country, even though it was one which she could implement only with the sanction of the Council of the League.

As might have been expected, the first constitutional steps of the tiny State, whose birth had been attended by so many international pains, were uncertain and short-lived. The infant Albania lisped in the current language of western parliamentary democracies, but that language did not correspond to the realities of Albanian life. Ethnically the oldest, the Albanians are politically the youngest of the Balkan peoples. Their difficult and sterile country, which has saved them from absorption by Slav or Turk, has also preserved in them a clan spirit which has been an obstacle to the growth of any national consciousness, or indeed of any idea of what, in the West, we understand by the State. The Albania of 1914 was a country of primitive conditions and general insecurity, a country in which turbulence was endemic and human life cheap, and it was against this background and in the presence of these realities that its first essays in constitutionalism were made.

The Lushnja deputies of 1920 had been replaced in April, 1921, by an elective Chamber which promulgated the first Constitution in December, 1932. This Constitution did not determine either the site of the capital, or the question of whether Albania was to be a monarchy or a republic, so that the system of the four Regents was provisionally continued. Between December, 1920 and December, 1922 a series of governments, labelled variously Nationalist and National-Democrat, followed each other in unreal procession under Elias bey Vrioni, Pandeli Vangeli (Orthodox), Hassan beg Prichtina (Italophil), and Djaferi Upi (Moslem), but in December, 1922, power passed to Ahmed bey Zogou, a Moslem of exceptional energy who was to maintain himself in the saddle until mid-1924.

A relative of Essad Pasha, Zogou had made himself a leading figure in a country in which considerations of person or clan take precedence of programmes. During the war he had opposed the Serbs and the Austrians alike, and since the peace he had been a steady opponent of the Italophils. His choice of Tirana as the capital was itself significant, being dictated apparently by a feeling

that Durazzo and Valona were too susceptible to Italian influence, and Scutari the centre of a Catholic population which hitherto had been alternately pro-Austrian and pro-Serb. Ahmed must probably have realized that the country which he aspired to rule could not be westernized in any real sense within a brief space of years, but he at once began to set on foot measures which aimed at assimilating Albania to the normal characteristics of the European State. Schools were set up, hospitals were opened, feudal titles were abolished. The repression of brigandage went hand in hand with attempts to subject the mountaineers to taxation; and the disarming of the bulk of the population was accompanied by the introduction of compulsory military service. Albania seemed to be moving towards the practices of western democracy under the sage patriarchal rule of an exceptional elder.

Partial though these changes necessarily were in scope and in effect, they were, however, formidable enough seriously to offend many prejudices and interests. In a country in which most men were illiterate, in which the tax-gatherer was regarded as a personal enemy, and in which the clan was the reality and the State a name, Zogou's modernizing efforts were certain to meet with strenuous opposition. The head of the State was sure of support only in his native district of the Mat. In the North, about Scutari, he had to meet a Catholic Italophil opposition led by Louis Guracucci and Archbishop Miedia who decried the government as a feudal régime embodying the Hegemony of the Moslem landowners. In the South he met with a similar opposition from the Orthodox elements led by Fan Noli. The elections of December, 1923, were fought by parties bearing the familiar western labels of Popular Nationalist (Government party), National Democrat, (Suleiman bey Delvino resting on Argirokastro, Berat and Koritsa), and Liberal (Scutari Italophils), but in reality these divisions were cut across by the activities of those extra-parliamentary societies with which the Balkans are everywhere familiar. Chief among these were the Kossoviot organization, a pan-islamic, anti-Slav propagandist group; the Vatra society, a nationalist organization of Albanian emigrants in America with their native centre at Koritsa; and the Klika, a junta of military officers of the approved Balkan pattern.

Opposition to Zogou from all these different quarters was steadily developing throughout the first part of 1924. On January 21st an attempt was made on his life, and in April the situation was further embittered by the murder of the deputy Avni Rustem, a prominent member of the Opposition and one believed to have been implicated in the attempt on Zogou's life. Unable to make

head against his difficulties, Zogou resigned on March 3rd in favour of his future relative by marriage Chefket bey Vrlassi, who in turn was compelled to give way on June 1st to Elias bey Vrioni. At that moment, however, a violent insurrection broke out in the North under the semi-brigand Red Jeb Chalya and the old Serbophobe partisan Bairam Tsour. Sympathetic movements followed in the South, and when the Government decided to recall Zogou and give him dictatorial powers in the emergency, it was already too late. Tirana was surrounded, and with desertions on every hand, the dictator seems to have resisted only long enough to give his personal partisans time to reach a place of safety before himself throwing up the sponge and withdrawing into Yugo-Slavia.

The new Government of Fan Noli, a former head of the Orthodox Albanians in Boston, U. S. A., was proclaimed on June 9th, 1924, and announced an ultra-liberal programme to which a distinctly western flavour was given by resonant declarations in favour of agrarian reform, anti-feudalism, and parliamentary democracy. It was not long, however, before this "European programme" was shelved, and parliament dissolved and not replaced. The Fannolist régime was also soon in difficulties abroad. Its negotiations with Italy for the formation of a National Albanian Bank and the grant of petroleum concessions were not pleasing to interested English groups. Its acceptance at Tirana of a Bolshevik legation disproportionately strong in numbers and in personnel had to be reversed on the protest of the Powers and of Yugo-Slavia. Finally, Fan Noli's apparent connivance at the activities of bands disturbing the Albanian-Serb frontier, and his relations with emissaries of the Bulgar-Macedonian societies, roused intelligible fears in Belgrade and further weakened his position. In the last month of the year, revolts starting from Valona in the South and Scutari in the North quickly revealed the slight hold which the Government had on the country. The capital was cut off, Fan Noli fled to Italy, and 1924 ended, as it had begun, with Ahmed Zogou in the saddle.

In trying to explain these violent changes of régime within a single year, it would be mistaken and useless to apply to Albania either the ideas or the terminology of English constitutionalism. The risings of 1924 were partly a matter of agrarian distress. The conditions under which Albanian agriculture had to be carried on, her wide areas of waste and marsh, her obsolete methods, her feudal tenures, and her almost total absence of communications, never left too wide a margin of safety, and in 1923-4 a bad harvest had exasperated the Southern population and produced real famine areas in the North. In March, 1924, the Government had appealed

for help through the League of Nations both to the Powers and to private charity, but the causes of the crisis were too deep to be immediately remedied by government action, and outside assistance came too late to prevent revolt. But the fact that agrarian discontent could twice in one year produce revolts formidable enough to upset a whole governmental régime, argues instability in the régime itself. In Albania, insurrection belongs to the rhythm of life. The mere idea of the national State as it has grown up in the West is as yet hardly more than beginning to take shape. In 1924 there were in the South some signs of a nascent national feeling implying a certain degree of what the West would call political consciousness, and there was perhaps everywhere among Albanians a largely instinctive wish to see their ruler (mbret) embody and personify Albanian independence; but there were many elements in Albanian life, especially in the North, which looked with hostility upon any measures which seemed to threaten to subordinate their idea of the clan to that of the State, or in any way to interfere with their traditional way of life. Ever since the Reformation, and especially since the French Revolution, Western Europe has accepted as the basis of its political thinking the essential rightness, sovereignty, and universality of the secular, territorial, national State, and this assumption was implicit in all the modernizing and centralizing work of Ahmed Zogou. Only if this assumption was admitted, could his reforms have any permanent prospect of commending themselves to an effective majority of his fellow countrymen. But in the Albania of 1924 these assumptions had still to win acceptance, and Ahmed's work met the same kind of opposition as faced that other purveyor of western ideas to the East, Mustapha Kemal. Few men in Albania felt concerned to admit that the claims of the State were necessarily to be more highly regarded than those of other societies, local or religious, so that considerations of persons, of local regionalisms, and of religious cults, cut across and thwarted those of the State. Ahmed might claim to speak for all Albania, but to the Catholic Albanian he appeared as the champion of the Moslems; to the peasant he stood for the rule of the Begs; in the eyes of the Northerner he represented rule from the centre, from Tirana and Durazzo.

Now this absence of any framework of national scope in Albanian politics is of more than Albanian importance. It is of international importance. For it means that each succeeding Government in Albania, feeling itself rooted in the support only of one régime, or one cult, or one class, tries to buttress its insecure position by leaning on some foreign help. There is a sense in which Albanian history since the War can be reduced to this cycle:—a

Government is set up and soon encounters all that opposition which, as we have seen, usually gathers in Albania about the depository of power; to strengthen its hand against these internal rivalries it cultivates close relations with a foreign neighbour, Italian, Serb, or Greek; it is then accused of subordinating native to foreign interests, and is overthrown; but its successor, which has come to power as the champion of Albanian independence, is likewise soon reduced by similar rivalries at home to make a similar bid for outside support, and the cycle begins again. Albanian nationalism, powerless as yet to act as a positive force and put politics on a national footing, has served as a negative resentment strong enough to pull down the hapless Governments which have been driven by force of circumstances to lean on the foreigner. International interest in Albania since the War has turned largely on the question of upon which foreign Power successive Albanian Governments would choose to lean.

At any time before 1924, a violent change in the complexion of Albanian affairs would have opened up the possibility of friction between Italy and Yugo-Slavia, but the Pact of Rome of January, 1924, had much improved relations between Rome and Belgrade, so that when Fan Noli seized power in June, both capitals promptly declared their joint disinterestedness. When Fan Noli was driven out, however, in December, one of his first acts was to appeal to the League of Nations accusing Yugo-Slavia of having instigated the revolt which led to Ahmed Zogou's return, and of having supported it with men and munitions. Both Ahmed and the Belgrade Government naturally denied the charge, and the Serbian Foreign Minister, Nintchitch, insisted that the events of December, 1924, had been a matter of Albanian domestic concern of which his Government had been a disinterested spectator. In truth, Yugo-Slav interests in Albania are quite simple. As part of her policy of the Balkans for the Balkan peoples, she would like to see in Albania a settled Government respectful of its neighbour's frontiers and strong enough to remove any pretext for foreign intervention. In the international sphere she has pleaded steadily for Albanian autonomy.

Zogou's own reply to the fugitive Fan Noli was to accuse him of having maintained himself by terrorism, and to announce (February, 1925) that the National Assembly had proclaimed Albania a republic with Zogou as its President. The new President was not long in making himself virtual dictator. Fan Noli and his partisans were in exile in Vienna. Guracucci, leader of the Scutari Liberals, fled to Bari where he was killed. Tatsati, Kiasim-Kot-souli, and Mustapha Maksout, chiefs of the Klika, were also driven

abroad. With a guard of 10,000 men, an obedient Assembly, and the hostile groups deprived of their leaders, opposition on Albanian soil was well-nigh paralyzed. Yet here the usual cycle in Albanian politics reappeared. Not content with the internal consolidation of his position, Zogou set himself from 1925 onwards to prepare a strong external aid in case of need. His first government had been, if anything, pro-Serb, but from the time of his return he began to lean on Italy.

The first ostensible signs of this rapprochement were in the field of economics. In March, 1925, the Italian State Railways were given the exclusive right of exploring and working certain of the Albanian petroleum and bitumen fields. In September, a National Albanian Bank was founded with its seat at Rome and its capital substantially controlled by Italian banks. Two months later came an Italo-Albanian navigation treaty. In April, 1926, the Societa per lo Sviluppo Economico dell'Albania (Svea) was authorized to issue bonds for 50 million gold francs with the object of carrying out a programme of public works in Albania. These funds, however, were deposited in the Italian Banca di Credito Italiano, and the public works for which they were destined were under the directions of a former head of the engineering section of the Italian War Office, and carried out by Italian groups. This economic penetration was facilitated by the fact that Italy was already far ahead of Greece or Serbia both as a market for Albanian exports and as a source of Albanian imports.¹

During 1926-7, under a ruler who at one time had stood as the peculiar champion of Albanian independence, the country passed rapidly into something like a definite Italian tutelage. The "Popolo d'Italia" recalled that this was the country in which Caesar had come face to face with Pompey, and bearing in mind the programme of road-building and of bridge-building, of draining and of fighting famine and disease, which Italy has carried through, there is some justification for the lyricism of those Fascist writers who have seen in her work a resumption of the constructive civilizing mission of ancient Rome. In 1925-6 Italy built in Albania roads and bridges which compelled the admiration of her critics. Plans were made to remodel Tirana as Zogou's prototype, Kemal, had remodelled Angora, and in a country which in 1914 had not a single railway the Italian "Adria aero Lloyd" set up modern airways linking the capital with the sea-ports and the sea-routes to Italy.

Laudible and constructive as much of this work was, foreign observers, and particularly French observers, repeatedly asked

1. Such was the poverty of communications in the Albania of 1920 that Italy had connections with the various regions of Albania which they lacked with each other. Scutari sent its skins to Italy to be reexported to Argyro-Kastro, and Valona sent its oil to Italy whence it returned to Scutari.

why Italy should make an effort so disproportionate to any harvest which she could hope to reap from it, and they found no difficulty in supplying their own answer. French opinion sees in the developments of the last five years an Italian attempt to make Albania a base for Italian penetration of the Balkans, and even for potential Italian military action. French publicists argue that the new Italian roads in Albania are strategic in purpose, and converge on the Yugo-Slav frontier. They point out that Italy has fortified the island of Saseno and the Gulf of Valona; that the port of Durazzo has been deepened to allow of the direct disembarkation of troops, and a railway projected which would carry such troops directly to Tirana; that an Italian mission is reorganizing the Albanian army; that the cadets of the Albanian military school are receiving their training in Italy. In French eyes, therefore, Italy's position in Albania threatens the whole stability of South Eastern Europe, for France's ally, Yugo-Slavia, must feel it as a sword held over her head, a perpetual menace never materializing, yet never definitely conjured away. As Paris sees it, the Southern Slavs will once more find themselves the obstacle across the path of a Balkan penetration. The "Drang nach Osten" of Imperial Germany and Austria Hungary is to be revived in the "Spinta verso l'Oriente" of Fascist Italy, and in case of conflict Italy will be already lodged at Serbia's back door.

Whatever Italy's plans, however, there was in 1926 one great limitation on their development. All her arrangements in Albania depended on the continuance in power of one man, and in a country in which all governments were notoriously short-lived, Zogou might well be driven out again as he had been driven out before. Accordingly it became Italy's aim to place the position which she had won beyond possibility of destruction by any of the recurrent internal crises of Albanian politics. On June 24th, 1926, the Italian Ambassador, Aloisi, invited Zogou formally to adhere to the declaration of the Ambassadors' Conference of November, 1921, by which, as we have seen, Italy was recognized as having a special interest in Albanian independence and a special relation towards its protection. The President was apparently not prepared for this step, and replied that he regarded his country's position as a member of the League of Nations as a sufficient guarantee of its independence. At the same time he informed England, France, and Yugo-Slavia of the most recent Italian move. England, who had never looked too favourably on the strategic claims which Italy had urged in order to obtain the consent of the Powers to the 1921 declaration, promptly asked Rome for an explanation. The Italian Government was apparently convinced

that it was necessary to placate London before any further step could be taken. It allowed it to be understood that Aloisi had exceeded his instructions, and brought him home on leave. At the same time it addressed itself to the task of calming English susceptibilities. On September 30th, 1926, M. Mussolini met Sir Austen Chamberlain at Leghorn. To what extent the Albanian situation was discussed between the two ministers, we do not know. England's main concern in the conversation was to redress the changes in the European balance brought about by her difficulties with Russia and by the rapprochement between France and Germany, and it seems unlikely that Albania was made the subject of any definite commitments. Sir Austen was to state later that he learned of the Pact of Tirana only on the eve of its publication, and it seems improbable that he foresaw the immediate lengths to which Italy would push her policy. On the other hand, the exchange of views between the two Governments seems to have left Italy with the impression that she might now proceed without fear of interference from London.

Events in Albania favoured her cause. In November, 1926, Zogou had to meet serious risings in the North, risings in which all the old forces of regionalism and of reaction against the centralization of the Tirana Government reappeared. Ahmed was accused of planning to become hereditary ruler, and the intrigues of displaced officials, such as the former commandant of Scutari, Malo beg Bouchati, lent fuel to the fire. Accordingly when Aloisi returned from Italy to renew the overtures for closer relations, the President was in need of every possible support, and he who had strained at the gnat in June, now swallowed the camel in November. On the 27th he signed with Aloisi the Pact of Tirana,¹ to last for 5 years. By its terms Albania and Italy recognized that any attack on the political, juridical, or territorial *status quo* of the former was contrary to their mutual political interest. They agreed to lend each other mutual support and cordial co-operation. Neither was to make any political or military agreement with a third party prejudicial to the interests of the other, and a special procedure was to be agreed upon for the regulation of their mutual differences. The interest of the Pact, of course, does not reside in the conclusion of an alliance between Italy and Albania. Real reciprocity between a great Power and a people of 800,000 souls is not to be expected. The real importance of the agreement lay in the fact that by guaranteeing not only the territorial, but also the political and juridical, *status quo* in Albania, Italy pledged herself to uphold and maintain

1. Ratified by the Albanian Assembly in December. In response to questions asked in the Assembly, Aloisi deemed it politic to send a note to the Albanian Foreign Minister, Hussein beg Vrioni, saying that Italy would intervene in Albania only if requested to do so by the Albanians.

the régime of Ahmed Zogou. The Pact, unlike the Declaration of 1921, gave her a right to intervene in Albania without awaiting the sanction of the Council of the League of Nations. It went without saying that if Italy was compelled to save Albania, it would not be for the Albanians.

The news of the Pact fell with disconcerting effect in Belgrade. M. Yeftitch, Yugo-Slav representative at Tirana, entered a protest, and in December, M. Nintchitch, who had worked unremittingly for improved Serbo-Italian relations, resigned on the ground that the new Italo-Albanian pact destroyed the bases upon which his policy had been reared. Rome, however, seemed concerned only to develop and consolidate her gains. In April, 1927, in reply to the rumoured intention of the Little Entente to proclaim a Monroe Doctrine for the Balkans to the exclusion of foreign intervention, M. Mussolini and Gemil Dino, Albanian representative at Rome, exchanged Notes by which it was agreed that neither party would take part without prior accord in any negotiation tending to interpret or extend the Pact of Tirana, or in any way affecting Italo-Albanian relations.

The summer and autumn of 1927 saw a series of sharp alarms. Yugo-Slavia was alleged to be making increases in her military establishment which Italy alleged were threatening Albanian security. In June the arrest of a dragoman of the Yugo-Slav Legation at Tirana, who had shown an indiscreet interest in the introduction of Italian war material into Albania, led to a rupture between Tirana and Belgrade which was patched over only by the intervention of the Powers. In October, the murder at Prague of Tséna beg, former Albanian Minister in Belgrade, produced a further crisis.

It was in this atmosphere that on 22nd Nov., 1927, Italy and Albania drew closer to each other by the Treaty of Tirana, a defensive military alliance, concluded for 20 years. Coming as it did on the morrow of the Franco-Yugo-Slav Treaty, and taken in conjunction with the belief that negotiations for an alliance were on foot between Italy and Hungary, it was looked upon in Paris and elsewhere as an Italian reply to the connection of France with the Little Entente.

In internal matters, the immediate result of the Pact and subsequent Treaty of Tirana was to strengthen Zogou's hand. The murder of Tséna beg and of Chefket beg Vrlassi had eliminated two of his outstanding rivals in popular opinion. Two more, in the persons of Hassan beg Prichtina, a member of the Kossoviot organization, and Mustapha Kroja, were involved in convenient "plots" and disgraced. With these competitors removed, and

Italy's guarantee of his régime in his pocket, he felt strong enough to attempt the revival of the monarchy. Under existing law, the constitution could be altered only by a majority of two-thirds of the Assembly and the Senate sitting jointly as a constituent assembly, and in any case the republican form of the constitution could not be subject to any modification. On June 7th, 1928, however, the two Chambers sitting together voted an organic law declaring that any fundamental change was within the competence of a special constituent assembly. Elections for such a special assembly were held in July, and on September 1st this constituent body unanimously voted the new constitution in which Albania is declared to be a democratic, parliamentary, and hereditary kingdom, and Ahmed Zogou, King of the Albanians. Italy, Serbia and Greece all gave the new régime their official recognition. Only the press of the Turkish Republic felt called upon to stigmatise Zogou's move as "reactionary", and to contrast the new order in Albania with the "national sovereignty which reigns as sole mistress in our midst!"

It has been hinted in some quarters that the suggestion that Zogou should revive the royal office in his own favour came from Rome. It is more likely that the initiative was his own. Ahmed must have known that Italy's support of his personal rule would end with the day on which he ceased to be able to advance her interests. So long as he remained merely a president whose mandate was to expire in 1932, there was always the possibility that Italy might be led to make one of his rivals the pivot of her policy. To make himself king would be not only to realize a personal ambition, but also to make his own elimination far more difficult. In other words, the restoration of the monarchy, though a move which in one sense strengthens the influence of Italy by elevating her client Zogou, was also in another sense a step by which that client might disengage himself in some degree from a too complete dependence upon her support.

For the immediate future, however, the new king did everything to develop that economic co-operation with Italy which he had begun when president. The process of road-building has gone on apace, and the roads built are of a kind far superior to anything of which the present traffic of Albania has need. A railway line was planned from Durazzo to Tirana and thence by Koritsa to link with Salonica and Constantinople, thereby forming a new artery for the stream of Balkan trade. Agricultural development, timber, copper, and oil, have all been made the subject of concessions to Italian groups. The Azienda Italiana Petroli Albania was given the monopoly of the sale of petrol in June, 1929. In January, 1928,

the Albanian Government and the Svea reached an agreement for port construction at Durazzo, the Italian Government itself agreeing to defray the excess expenditure. In return, Italian shipping was to be free of all port dues for 5 years, a concession which has given the Italian company (Puglia) engaged in the coastal traffic a great advantage over its Slav competitor (Jadranska plovidba). Finally, while the Albanian army numbers a mere 12,000 men, Italy has accumulated in the country war material for the equipment of 100,000.

To sum up: Italy controls the army, the finances, and the policy of Albania. The essential means of its material development are exclusively in her hands, and their application depends on her consent. Hitherto, each successive conqueror, Slav or Turk, who has tried to reduce Albania, has failed for lack of one thing:—roads. Italy has built the roads, and on the framework of the roads may yet be built a State. Therein lies Italy's danger. For as Albania is progressively unified and centralized and modernized, this very development may well give rise to that impatient nationalism which is never so intransigent as in an adolescent state. By accepting a foreign tutelage and at the same time developing the sense of national consciousness, Zogou may well be setting in motion two forces which cannot be reconciled. Rome must know that in Albania every Government rises through reaction against foreign influence and lives until the day when, submitting to that influence itself, it falls before the forces which once set it up. Some day Italy may have to support with arms a dictator whom she has hopelessly compromised in the eyes of his compatriots. If that day comes too soon, it will not be without its international difficulties. For if Italy claims that Albania is to her what Belgium is to England, France sees in it only one aspect of a policy of encirclement directed against Belgrade, a policy pressed with persistence, though with unequal success, in Athens, in Sofia, and in Budapest. In the eyes of many Frenchmen, Sazonoff's prophecy of 1915 stands already fulfilled, and Fascist Rome to-day resumes, in all the vigour of its anti-Slav tradition, the policy of the Hapsburgs of Vienna.