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**THE ALBANIAN PARTISANS OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY IN
THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

During the First World War, the occupying powers in Albania attempted to instrumentalise the national sentiments of the patriots, in order to gain support for their armies.¹ In the autumn of 1914, the Albanian nationalists fled from the central Albanian insurgents in various directions. Some of them, such as Aqif Pasha Elbasani, Refik Bey Toptani, Fuad Bey Toptani, Kara Seit Pasha, Bajram Curri, Isa Boletini, Bajram Daklani and many other Kosovo Albanians, settled in Shkodra because they thought that they could invade the Albanian territories annexed by Serbia from there.² Consul Halla in Shkodra motivated the Kosovo Albanian nationalists to organise military volunteer units to fight against the Serbian occupiers in Kosovo.³ In February 1915, a volunteer unit led by Hasan Bey Prishtina and Bajram Curri entered Kosovo and temporarily pushed the Serbian troops back as far as Prizren.⁴

¹ Kadria, Sali (2014): Aspekte të gjëndjes së nacionalizmit shqiptar gjatë viteve 1916-1918 në zonën e pushtimit austro-hungarez. In: Studime Historike 51, nr. 3-4, 111-128.

² HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 25-4-485: Telegramm des k. u. k. Botschafters Pallavicini an den Minister des Äußeren in Wien, Istanbul am 26.1.1915.

³ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 25-4-483: Telegramm des k. u. k. Konsuls Karl Halla in Shkodra an das MdÄ, 29.1.1915.

⁴ Alizoti, Fejzi (2012): Kujtimet e jetës sime politike (1891-1921). Tirana: Albas, 95.

In the spring of 1915, the organisation “Komiteti i Fshehtë” (Secret Committee) was founded in Shkodra with Hoxha Kadriu as its chairman. Its goals were the defence of the Albanian national question, the liberation of Kosovo from the Serbs and its unification with the Albanian state.⁵ After September 1915, a group of nationalists fled to the Mati area to seek refuge with Ahmet Zogu. Another group emigrated to the USA and joined the All-Albanian Association “Vatra”, which became the most influential national organisation of the Albanians.⁶ The association began a campaign to send volunteer troops to defend Albania against the Greek occupiers. Vatra drafted a national programme to save Albania from dismemberment and to unite all Albanian settlements in one state, for which the Albanians were to remain neutral in the Great War.⁷ Efforts to form a joint national committee of all Albanian colonies failed due to differences of opinion between the supporters of Fan Noli and those of Kristo Dako.

The majority of Albanian nationalists wanted the central powers to win because Austria-Hungary was against Serbia and had spoken out in favour of the Albanian question at the London Ambassadors’ Conference. On 23rd January 1916, Austro-Hungarian troops marched into Shkodra. On 28th January 1916, a group of influential personalities, including Prenk Bibë Doda, Seit Pasha, Fejzi Alizoti, Luigj Gurakuqi and Aqif Pasha Elbasani, appealed to the population to welcome the Austro-Hungarian troops as “liberators” after they had driven the Serbian and Montenegrin occupiers out of Shkodra.⁸ However, on 1st April 1916, the Supreme Command announced the establishment of an Austro-Hungarian military administration in the occupied territories, until the Albanians were

⁵ AQSH, F. 882, D. 9: Blatt 707-708. “Komiteti i Fshehtë”.

⁶ Meta, Beqir (2001): *Federata panshqiptare “Vatra” (1912-1920)*. Tirana: Globus R., 143.

⁷ AQSH, F. 100, D. 11: Blatt 1-2. Natick Mass., 1 Vjeshtë e parë 1915.

⁸ KA, NFA, KK XIX. Korps, K 2574: Aufruf im Original u. in Übersetzung; Nosi (2007), 244-246.

ready for self-government. With this act, Austria-Hungary violated in the eyes of the Albanian nationalists the London resolutions, which had recognised Albania as an independent and neutral state, and made Albanian independence a promise.⁹

Nevertheless, they continued to strive for the preservation of an independent Albania and the inclusion of the Albanian settlement areas left outside its borders. Under the influence of the austrophile Albanian patriots, Consul General August Kral proposed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephan Burián at the beginning of February 1916 that Albania should be extended to the north-east with the Albanian settlement areas in Montenegro and Serbia by placing them under the military administration of the 19th Corps Command.¹⁰

Relying on the support of the Ballhausplatz, the Kosovo Albanian irredentists led by Hasan Prishtina presented Consul General Kral with a memorandum in November 1916 in which they demanded the unification of the territories of Peja, Gjakova, Gucia, Mitrovica and Vuçitern with the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone in Albania, not least in order to exert pressure on the Bulgarian government to do the same with the Albanian territories it occupied.¹¹ The AOK (Army Higher Command), particularly under the influence of the Imperial-Royal Governor General in Montenegro,¹² spoke out against this, because the establishment of Albanian unity with the help of an

⁹ Vlora, Syrja (2013): *Kujtime. Nga fundi i sundimit osman në luftën e Vlorës*.

Përgatitur për botim nga Marenglen Verli dhe Ledia Dushku. Tirana: Iceberg, 164.

¹⁰ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-7-736: Chiffretelegramm des MdÄ an Fürst Hohenlohe in Berlin, Wien am 2.2.1916); HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26–3–368: Streng vertraulicher Brief des Ministers des Äußeren Burián an Generalkonsul Kral in Shkodra, Wien am 13.6.1916.

¹¹ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-7-747: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an den Minister des Äußeren Burián, Shkodra am 30.11.1916.

¹² HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 27-2-255: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 20.12.1917.

Austro-Hungarian protectorate was not a political priority in the current period.¹³

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, an Albanian government was to be established and a national congress to be convened to precisely define the national goals.¹⁴ At the beginning of 1916, Zogu and his armed supporters entered Elbasan, where Aqif Pasha Elbasani appointed his nephew Irfan Ohër as prefect, introduced Albanian as the official language and had the Albanian flag hoisted alongside the Bulgarian flag.¹⁵ Zogu extended his control to the Elbasan-Peqin-Lushnja-Mallakastra-Berat-Skrapar region.¹⁶ Together with Aqif Pasha Elbasani, Mid'hat Frashëri and Lef Nosi, Zogu developed the idea of convening a national congress to officially declare Albania's neutrality until the end of the war.¹⁷ To ensure the continuation of the Albanian state during the Austro-Hungarian occupation, they wanted to reestablish the Albanian administration.

During the months of February and March 1916, the “Komisioni i Veprimit” (Action Commission) was formed in Elbasan under Zogu's direction, whose members included Aqif Pasha Elbasani, Lef Nosi, Ahmet Haxhisinani, Sava Papajani, Shefqet Daiu, Simon Shuteriqi and Ymer Stringa.¹⁸ In view of the lack of administration in Albania and because he had been Minister of the Interior and Justice

¹³ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-3-1216: Befehl Nr. 150 des AOK an 19. Korpskommando in Shkodra, Teschen am 10.12.1916; HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-4-437: Bericht von Thurn an den Minister des Äußeren Burián, Teschen am 7.8.1916.

¹⁴ Çami, Muin (1987): *Shqipëria në marrëdhëniet ndërkombëtare (1914-1918)*. Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave, 256.

¹⁵ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-18-1850: Beilage zum Bericht aus Shkodra Nr. 16/pol. an das k. u. k. Stationskommando in Elbasan, Shkodra am 23.3.1916.

¹⁶ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-10-1022: Brief des Kommandanten der nationalen Truppen in Albanien Ahmet Muftar Zogolli an das Höchste Kommando in Shkodra, Elbasan am 5.3.1916.

¹⁷ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-18-1850: Beilage zum Bericht aus Shkodra Nr. 16/pol. an das k. u. k. Stationskommando in Elbasan, Shkodra am 23.3.1916.

¹⁸ Çami (1987), 256.

under Prince Wilhem zu Wied, this commission instructed Aqif Pasha Elbasani to invite all his ex-colleagues to Elbasan to form a new government, after the Turhan Pasha government had never officially resigned.

Aqif Pasha Elbasani appointed several prefects, sub-prefects and mayors, mainly in Elbasan, Durrës and Berat. The appointment of municipal officials was intended as a first step towards the reestablishment of an Albanian government that would include the ministers of Wied's regency.¹⁹ On 18th February 1916, Zogu, in his capacity as chairman of the Action Commission, informed all prefectures, sub-prefectures and Albanian colonies in Bucharest, Sofia and Lausanne by telegraph that a national congress would be held in Elbasan on 2nd April 1916, to which they were to send their representatives.²⁰

Prince Wied was to return to Albania so that the new Albanian government could be legalised. The Albanians were to prove to the Austro-Hungarian military authorities that they were capable of founding a state, and the new government was to serve as the main argument in favour of the continuation of the Albanian nation state after the war.²¹ The idea of convening an Albanian National Congress was supported by Lieutenant Zistovski, vice-consul and head of the reconnaissance office in Elbasan.²² In order to neutralise the Bulgarian propaganda smoothly, the station command in Elbasan gave

¹⁹ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-620: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 22.3.1916; Çami (1987), 257.

²⁰ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-634: Telegramm des Leutnants Zistovski an das Höchste Kommando in Shkodra, Elbasan am 12.3.1916; Nosi (2007), 251.

²¹ Çami (1987), 258.

²² HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-634: Telegramm des Leutnants Zistovski an das Höchste Kommando in Shkodra, Elbasan am 12.3.1916; HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-18-1850: Beilage zum Bericht aus Shkodra Nr. 16/pol. an das k. u. k. Stationskommando in Elbasan, Shkodra am 23.3.1916.

permission for the congress to be held.²³ However, Consul General Kral, who had in the meantime been curbed by the Ballhausplatz, opposed it, because he feared both the establishment of an Albanian government and the need to liberate and unite all Albanian settlement areas.²⁴ He therefore, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ordered to ban the holding of the congress.²⁵

The ban on holding the National Congress, the dissolution of the “government” established by Aqif Pasha Elbasani and the proclamation of the Supreme Command on 23rd January 1917, which announced the granting of self-government as soon as the appropriate conditions had been created, deeply disappointed the Albanian nationalists, as they now realised that Albania was being treated as an occupied country by the Dual Monarchy.²⁶ Many of the current Albanian partisans of Austria-Hungary turned their backs on the Ballhausplatz for good, because they were offended above all by the accusation of political immaturity and a lack of national consciousness.²⁷ Some Albanian patriots continued to pin their hopes on Vienna, because they were convinced that they could only achieve the liberation of all Albanian settlement areas with the help of the Habsburg Monarchy.²⁸ The organisation of the civil administration was in the hands of Consul General Kral, whose field of activity was extended in September 1916 to the areas of finance, justice and

²³ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-626: Telegramme des Leutnants Zistovski in Elbasan an das Höchste Kommando in Shkodra, Elbasan am 14. u. 15.3.1916.

²⁴ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-635: Chiffretelegramm von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 16.3.1916).

²⁵ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-631: Chiffretelegramm von Graf Thurn an das MdÄ, 17.3.1916.

²⁶ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-6-618: Chiffretelegramm des MdÄ an Generalkonsul Kral in Shkodra, Wien am 23.3.1916; HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 27-8-819: Chiffretelegramm von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 23.1.1917); Çami (1987), 276.

²⁷ Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 6 janar 1917, 1.

²⁸ Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 27 janar 1917, 1.

education.²⁹ Three main directorates were established: the General Directorate of Finance under the direction of Fejzi Alizoti, the General Directorate of Education under the direction of Luigj Gurakuqi and the General Directorate of Justice under the direction of Masar Asllani and then Avni Dabulla.³⁰ Shortly afterwards, the administration was organised in the districts, counties and municipalities.³¹

The officials of the military administration accommodated the needs and concerns of the Albanians with regard to administration and cultural activities, in order to win them over for the fight against the enemy armies, while the Albanian patriots tried to utilise these facilitations for the benefit of the national question, i.e. the unification of all Albanian settlement areas in a nation state. Nevertheless, there were clear limits to activity in this direction: the relentless application of martial law against all those who indulged in political activity. The strict interpretation of the laws and orders was intended to make it clear to the locals that above individual power stood collective power and government authority, to which every Albanian without exception had to submit.³²

The Albanian nationalists, in cooperation with the Austro-Hungarian officials, endeavoured to promote the national consciousness of the population in three ways: Teaching the Albanian language according to a standardised curriculum in all schools; appointing respected personalities with a good command of written and spoken Albanian to the administration; distributing books and newspapers with national content in a language that everyone could

²⁹ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-16-1637: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 15.9.1916.

³⁰ Alizoti (2012), 101.

³¹ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 28-6-659: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 24.5.1918.

³² Vllamasi, Sejfi (2012): Ballafaqime politike në Shqipëri 1897-1942 (kujtime dhe vlerësime historike), Tiranë: Vllamasi, 133.

understand.³³ Nonetheless, the content of the writings was checked beforehand by the General Staff's Evidence Office for possible anti-Austro-Hungarian propaganda. The following was said about some of Mid'hat Frashëri's books: *"... it is stated, on the basis of the five books sent, that the author is identical with the well-known southern Albanian patriot and writer Mid'hat Bey Frashëri ... There is nothing in the books that we have to fight against, because the recognition of the Albanian tribe and its national individuality was only one point of our Balkan programme ... The brochures are not directed against Austria, which is why it is requested that their distribution ... should not be made difficult."*³⁴

Albanian was introduced as an official language and the Albanian flag was allowed to be flown. Local officials had to write their reports in either Albanian or German.³⁵ The Albanian administration in the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone created for the first time a standardised model for formulating official letters.³⁶ The General Directorate of Finance had all books, registers, regulations and orders translated into Albanian. The development of the tax system in the sense of regular and corruption-free tax collection was of great importance for the future existence of an autonomous Albania.³⁷ The General Directorate of Justice, with the active support of Consul General Kral, undertook important reforms in the judicial system. On 18th May 1918, Albanian was introduced as

³³ Gjergj Fishta: Gjuha Shqype. In: Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 24 shkurt 1917, 1; HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26–20–2031: Schreiben des MdÄ, I/A, Nr. 249 an Rappaport, Wien am 19.1.1916; HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-20-2012: Schreiben des MdÄ an Generalkonsul Kral in Shkodra, Wien am 8.4.1916.

³⁴ KA, NFA, 19. Korps, K 2597, 1916, Kundschaftsakten, Nr. 1237. März-Juni. Evidenzbüro des Generalstabs.

³⁵ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-20-2012: Schreiben des MdÄ an Generalkonsul Kral in Shkodra, Wien am 8.4.1916).

³⁶ AQSH, F. 235, D. 11: Blatt 1.

³⁷ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 27-5-552: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 30.9.1917.

the official language in all Sharia courts.³⁸ So-called “reconciliation courts” were set up in the larger cities for civil and commercial disputes.

In Shkodra, the administrative centre of the Austro-Hungarian occupation zone, an appeals court was established as a collegial court of second instance.³⁹ Another important issue for the Albanian patriots was the development of the education system. In this context, the Literary Commission, set up with the approval of the Supreme Command, to standardise spelling and create a common literary language, played a central role. In the 1916/1917 school year alone, 24 new schools were opened in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Military Administration, the majority of them in the villages.⁴⁰

However, primary schools were also opened in the Albanian-inhabited areas of Montenegro and Kosovo, where teaching in Albanian had previously been banned, and the slaviced surnames of Albanian families were restored to their previous form – both a great success for the Albanian nationalists.⁴¹ Compulsory schooling for boys between the ages of 7 and 14 and a curriculum based on the Austrian model were introduced, and schoolbooks were printed in the Elbasan dialect in accordance with the regulations of the Literary Commission. The patriotic-minded teachers endeavoured to awaken the “spirit of Skanderbeg” as a symbol of national unity in the hearts of all pupils.⁴² Around 84 young people were sent to study at Austro-

³⁸ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 28-68: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 14.6.1918; Gjuha shqype gjuhë zyrtet në gjyqje të Sheriatit. Nga Korpskomanda p. e mb. XIX. E. V. nr. 3962/III. In: Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 29 qershor 1918, 4.

³⁹ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-16-1660: Schreiben Nr. 1016/2. Die provisorische Organisation der Zivilgerichte in Albanien, Shkodra am 8.10.1916.

⁴⁰ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 27-1-109: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an Graf Czernin, Shkodra am 17.6.1917.

⁴¹ Rushiti, Limon (1986): Rrethanat politiko-shoqërore në Kosovë 1912-1918. Prishtina: Rilindja, 192.

⁴² Gjergj Fishta: Mas 450 vjetsh. In: Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 17 janar 1917, 1.

Hungarian universities and a further 25 to military academies in Vienna and Budapest.⁴³

Investments in infrastructure, such as road, railway and bridge construction and the establishment of post offices in the larger cities of Shkodra, Durrës, Lezha, Tirana and Elbasan, were also important for the faster spread of the national idea.⁴⁴ The first census starting on 1st March 1918 in the Albanian territories occupied by Austro-Hungarian troops provided the nationalists for the first time with information about actual demographic developments, enabling them to better formulate their national programmes and objectives.

The determination of religious, regional and ethnic affiliation was based on the personal declaration of each registered resident.⁴⁵ Another measure taken by the Austro-Hungarian military authorities, namely the provision of every Albanian with an identity card and the associated control of travelling within and outside the country, was initially interpreted negatively by Albanian historiography in terms of national interests.⁴⁶ However, Sali Kadria expressed the opinion that this measure promoted the strengthening of national identity, because the Albanian nationality was recorded on all identity cards – instead of the previously valid identity according to confessional affiliation.⁴⁷ In addition, the Albanians had come to believe that the state had the right and the duty to be informed about the movements of its citizens and to control the state's borders and territory. On the other hand, during the

⁴³ Lajme vendit. Zansa shqyptarë n' Monarkië. In: Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 6 tetor 1917, 3; Djelmt shqyptarë n' Kadetexhule. In: Posta e Shqypniës. Shkodra, 5 shtator 1917, 3.

⁴⁴ HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 27-7-772: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an das MdÄ, Shkodra am 7.1.1917; HHStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-20-2016: Schreiben von Wiesner, dem Vertreter des MdÄ beim AOK, an Generalkonsul Kral in Shkodra, Teschen am 14.6.1916.

⁴⁵ Seiner, Franz (1922): Ergebnisse der Volkszählung in Albanien in dem von österreichisch-ungarischen Truppen 1916-18 besetzten Gebiete. Wien, Leipzig: Hölder, Pichler, Tempsky, 9.

⁴⁶ Çami (1987), 264.

⁴⁷ Kadria (2014), 125.

formation of volunteer troops there were massive problems between the Austro-Hungarian officers and the Albanian recruits, who did not want to be abused as “cannon fodder” and insulted with regard to their cultural level. The formations with Albanian soldiers were not allowed to use Albanian flags or Albanian as the language of command.⁴⁸

In his memoirs, in the chapter on the occupation period 1916-1918, Syrja Vlora dedicates just one page to the praiseworthy actions of the Austro-Hungarian military administration – own council for Sharia jurisdiction, regulation of financial matters, education commissioner Luigj Gurakuqi, formation of the Literary Commission under the direction of Gjergj Pekmezi to standardise the language, grain deliveries from the monarchy to successfully eliminate famines, elimination of epidemics such as typhus and cholera, organisation of the police and gendarmerie with a majority of local officers, installation of a telephone network throughout the country, expansion of the road network and postal system –, while he spends almost ten pages criticising the hostile behaviour of the military authorities, explicitly by their Slavic representatives, towards the Albanian people, explicitly the Muslims, in his explanations ranging from the aims of Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy before the Balkan wars to the occupation policy of the Dual Monarchy.⁴⁹

The interest of the Albanian austrophiles was - always in accordance with their own nationalist interests - to act as agents of Austro-Hungarian interests in Albania.⁵⁰ The individuals and groupings of the Austro-Hungarian bridgehead on Albanian territories were representatives of the Catholic clergy, the mostly Catholic tribes

⁴⁸ HHSStA, PA, Albanien, im AIH, Vj. 26-4-439: Bericht von Generalkonsul Kral an Rappaport, Shkodra am 7.8.1916.

⁴⁹ Vlora (2013), 156-164.

⁵⁰ Gostentschnigg, Kurt (2018): *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Militär. Die österreichisch-ungarische Albanologie 1867-1918*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 519-612; Gostentschnigg, Kurt (2016): *Die albanischen Parteigänger Österreich-Ungarns. Ein Versuch der Rekonstruktion des Brückenkopf-Feldes an der Peripherie des habsburgischen Zentrums*. Nö: Shejzat 1, nr. 1-2, 119-170.

of northern Albania - mainly in Mirdita and Dukagjin, the largely Muslim landowning class of central and southern Albania and the Albanian ex-studentship in Austria-Hungary, who belonged to the intellectual elite with a Western education. The bridgehead Austrophiles of the centre Austria-Hungary, located on the periphery, was made up of various individual and collective Albanian partner actors of Austria-Hungary, each of whom must be viewed in a very differentiated way. On the one hand, they belonged to different social classes; on the other, their motives were diverse. These actors competed to maintain or change power relations on the basis of their economic capital, i.e. financial assets and material possessions, their cultural capital, i.e. education and professional status, their social capital, i.e. relationships and networks, and their symbolic capital, i.e. prestige and social reputation.

The loyalty of these individual and collective actors to the centre varied in degree and duration, so that they could simultaneously or successively belong to the bridgehead of another centre or several other centres. In the period from the first Albanian campaign of the Austrian-Hungarian ministry of foreign affairs in 1896/97 to the end of the First World War, it was therefore possible to distinguish between several types of partner actors: the *permanently loyal*, the *temporarily loyal* and the *manoeuvring-fluctuating* one.

The permanently loyal type was loyal for the entire duration of the cooperation between the centre and the bridgehead. The temporarily loyal type was loyal temporarily or in phases, i.e. it could, for example, be part of the bridgehead of one centre for a few years and then switch to the camp of another centre and become an opponent of one centre. The manoeuvring-fluctuating type either switched between the camps of two or more centres, depending on its own interests, or belonged to the camps of two or even more centres at the same time. One thing can be said with certainty: the most representatives are of the temporarily loyal and manoeuvring-fluctuating type, which seem to be characteristic of the situation and mentality of the Albanians. The transitions between these two types

are also fluid, and therefore the categorisation of their representatives can vary depending on the subjective perspective and interpretation. Furthermore, not enough information is available on all individual partner actors, so that their categorisation may change as a result of the interpretation of newly emerged data material. A small people that was just beginning to establish itself as a nation and was in danger of being degraded to the plaything of the interests of the great powers and neighbouring states due to the still prevailing particularism, tried to emancipate itself in its awakening elite from the foreign powers by manoeuvring and fluctuating and to assert its own interests.

From 1896 until at least 1914, the centre Austria-Hungary could only rely on a few representatives of its bridgehead on the periphery in Albania, namely on Syrja Bey Vlora, Eqrem Bey Vlora, Lazër Mjeda and Gjergj Pekmezi. The foreign policy reorientation of Syrja and Eqrem Vlora during the First World War allows for two interpretations: on the one hand, one could assume in retrospect, that the two Vloras were no longer one hundred per cent supporters of the Austro-Hungarian Albania policy from around the beginning of the First World War and had already begun to orientate themselves towards Italy during that phase; on the other hand, however, one would also have to concede to the Vlora family that after the First World War, with the end of the Dual Monarchy, the choice of foreign policy orientation, despite all justified reservations, could only fall on Italy in view of the anti-Albanian interests of the neighbouring states of Montenegro, Serbia and Greece.

Mjeda's disappointment that the Austro-Hungarian ministry of foreign affairs had not been able to make him Archbishop of Shkodra, certainly dampened his willingness to cooperate with Vienna for a while. At least since the beginning of the First World War, Syrja Vlora no longer enjoyed the full trust of Vienna, and this probably also applied to a certain extent to his son Eqrem Vlora. Pekmezi, who spent most of his time in Vienna, where he worked as an Albanologist at the university and as an Albania expert for the Ballhausplatz, occupied a special position between the fields of science, politics and

austrophiles, and only his conflict with August Kral over the Literary Commission in Shkodra during the First World War overshadowed at the end the hitherto harmonious relationship with the Ballhausplatz. In the case of Aqif Pasha Elbasani/Biçakçiu, Sali Butka and Bajram Curri, it still needs to be investigated, in which period – apart from the First World War - they were actually exclusively austrophiles. Regarding Fazil Bey Pasha Toptani, there is too little information available for him to be clearly categorised.

Faik Bey Konica switched back to the Italian camp after many years and became an opponent of Austria-Hungary out of disappointment. Mufit Bey Libohova, Isa Boletini and Hasan Bey Prishtina had only been staunch supporters of Austria-Hungary since around the time of the Balkan Wars. Prenk Doçi, who initially enjoyed great trust from the Viennese side, turned out to be more and more of an Italophile uncertainty factor, until he was finally dropped shortly before the Balkan Wars. Pashk Trokshi played a double game with Vienna from the very beginning. Ismail Qemal Vlora was the controversial embarrassment candidate of the foreign minister Leopold Berchtold for the proclamation of independence, after Syrja Bey Vlora had been played against the wall by the former. Luigj Gurakuqi was always suspected of also being a supporter of Italy. The Austro-Hungarian support for Marka Gjoni was discontinued in 1913 because of his pro-Serbian agitation, and Prenk Bibë Doda was in any case a master of manoeuvring between the French, Italian, Montenegrin, Serbian and Austro-Hungarian camps.

The decisive factors for Austria-Hungary's insufficient assertion of its interests against its bridgehead representatives were summarised as follows: the division of the Catholic clergy of northern Albania between Italy and Austria-Hungary; the regionalism of the northern Albanian tribes, especially the Mirdites under Prenk Bibë Doda; the Dual Monarchy's loss of influence over the Catholics of northern Albania due to Ludwig Thallóczy's negative role in the 1883 uprising of the Shkodran mountain tribes against the Ottoman Empire over possible territorial cessions to Montenegro; the long-lasting anti-

Austrian attitude of the respected, wealthy families of the Toptanis in Tirana/Central Albania, who were paid by the Ottoman administration; the failure of Syrja Bey Vlora and Eqrem Bey Vlora to convene a national assembly; the imprisonment of important Kosovo Albanian politicians such as Hasan Prishtina in Belgrade for several months during the Balkan Wars; the ambivalent attitude towards Austria-Hungary on the part of important bridgehead representatives such as Prenk Doçi, Pashk Trokshi, Prenk Bibë Doda and Faik Konica; the partly blameless failure of the non-Albanian bridgehead representative Prince Wilhelm zu Wied; the assertion of the principle of internationalisation over the principle of the protectorate at the London Ambassadors' Conference regarding the founding of an Albanian state; the restrictive military administration, especially at the beginning of the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Albania from 1916 to 1918, and the permanent opposition between the foreign policy leadership and the military leadership in Vienna.