

ALBANIAN NATION-BUILDING AND AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN PEOPLE INTO A MODERN NATION

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Abstract: Diplomatic, political, economic, cultural, and scientific relations between Hungary and Albania date back to before 1918. At the time, Hungary was considered to possess and control half of a great power: the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ballhausplatz) played a crucial role in the strengthening of the Albanian national movement at the turn of the century and in preparing the members of that movement for the tasks to be performed as leaders of an independent nation-state.

Based on archival sources yet to be published and relying on previous literature, the present study takes a historiographical approach in demonstrating how the so-called Albanian question gained increasing importance and became a priority of foreign policy for the Ballhausplatz while the interests of the Albanian national movement intertwined with the aspirations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a great power. The paper also shows what roles the experts of the Austrian and the Hungarian part of the Monarchy and certain members of the Albanian national movement played in this joint venture. The paper concludes that the Austrians played a key role in building the Albanian statehood, while Hungarian scholar Lajos Thallóczy, representing Hungarian political and historical thought, made an unparalleled contribution to the modern Albanian nation-building process.

Keywords: Albanian policy of Austria-Hungary, Albanian national movement, Lajos Thallóczy, post-imperial life in Albania

Introduction

The nation-building of Muslim-majority peoples tends to be treated as a single whole in the literature, even though two of these peoples are indigenous to Europe, and their nation-building and state-building deserve to be a separate field of research. What Bosnian and Albanian nation-building had in common was that the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy played a decisive role in both processes, and it was Hungarian theoretician Lajos Thallóczy (1857–1916) who was especially successful in exporting the experience of Hungarian nation-building to Albania through his publications, although his efforts failed in Bosnia (Csaplár–Degovics, 2022). The difference between his success and failure was rooted in the fact that the Hungarian model could only be efficiently exported to a place where the people, like the Hungarians, had a very strong ethnic consciousness and existed as a language enclave in the midst of the neighbouring nations.

The present paper summarizes how the Monarchy started to build relations with the Albanian national movement at the turn of the century, why the Albanians accepted the support of a great empire in their nation-building, and how Thallóczy influenced the development of Albanian national thought as an external player. The paper explores how independent Albania was created in 1912–1913, and how the Austro–Hungarian programme has been able to determine the stages of Albanian nation-building and the development of the Albanian national self-image virtually to date, long after the fall of the Danube Monarchy.

The Albanian Policy of Austria–Hungary

The First Contact Between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Albanian-Inhabited Territories

The Albanian question emerged in international politics in the aftermath of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1878). Although the crisis was clearly the domestic affair of the Ottoman Empire, the sovereignty of the Ottomans

was no longer undisputable, which, in turn, motivated external powers to vie for influence in the former Ottoman territories. At the turn of the century, three great powers were directly or indirectly interested in the fate of Albania: the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Italy, and Russia (Clewing, 2002; Dakin, 1962; Hayne, 1987).

After the Treaty of Vienna in 1615 (Bittner, 1903; Ippen, 1901-1902), the Habsburgs followed the French example and increased their power as a cult protectorate over the Catholic subjects living in the Ottoman Empire through the series of treaties that put an end to the Reconquest Wars (Karlowitz (1699), Požarevac (1718), Belgrade (1739), Sistova (1791)), as well as through the Treaty of Constantinople (1681) and the Congress of Vienna (1815) (Gostentschnigg, 1996; Ippen, 1901-1902; Benna, 1954; Lammeyer, 1919). Cult protectorate rights were exercised by the local consuls and the ambassador in Constantinople. These rights were originally based on secular contracts, and they were recognized by Pope Gregory XVI in 1837 and reaffirmed at the 1855 Concord of Vienna. Around 1910, the cult protectorate had approximately 220 institutions in the Albanian territories (131 of which were parishes, while the remainder were schools of various educational levels, hospitals, printing houses, etc.) (Gostentschnigg, 1996; Deusch, 2009). The religious and humanitarian protectorate had no political aspect whatsoever until the end of the nineteenth century. Beside building its influence over the Catholic subjects, Vienna also took control of Venetian Albania under the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797), which became the southernmost part of Dalmatia, called "Austrian Albania" (Müller, 1844). Austria-Hungary finally took more interest in Southeast Europe after its indirect power position was shattered in the Italian and German territories due to the unification of Italy and Germany, and after Russian hegemony was strengthened in Eastern Europe.

The Great Eastern Crisis and its Consequences

From 1815 on, the great powers decided on the political and territorial changes in Europe. One of the most important topics of this cooperation from the 1830s onward was what is referred to as the Eastern Question, an issue that directly affected all the great powers (Anderson, 1966; Löhr, 1992).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the most important changes concerning the Ottoman Empire took place during the Great Eastern Crisis (or, in a broader sense, between 1875 and 1885). When the events in Herzegovina and the Bulgarian uprising (sectarian and ethnic conflicts, the slaughtering of Christian civilians by the Ottoman army in Bulgaria) started the Serbian/Montenegrin–Ottoman war in 1876, Vienna became concerned that a Russian satellite state was about to be established in the Balkans and that Serbia might gain access to the Adriatic. The defeat of the small Slavic states, however, placed Russia in quite a predicament, as failure to make an armed intervention would have discredited the empire in the eyes of the peoples of the Balkans.

To avoid open conflict, the representatives of Russia and the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy entered into negotiations in 1876 (Reichstadt) and 1877 (Budapest). In Budapest, the parties agreed that in the event of a Russian–Ottoman conflict, the Monarchy would remain neutral, but in return Bosnia–Herzegovina would come under the control of the Monarchy if the Ottoman Empire collapsed. That way, no great Slavic state would be created, the Serbs would have no access to the Adriatic, and it would be possible to maintain balance among the new states of the Balkan Peninsula. In the Budapest agreement, which was concluded on the eve of an imminent war, the parties confirmed the Reichstadt agreement and effectively divided the Balkan Peninsula into a western and eastern area of influence. Russia promised to confine its military operations to the eastern part of the Balkans and observe the boundaries of the Monarchy’s area of influence. The territories inhabited by the Albanians thus came under the control of Austria–Hungary (Bridge, 1989).

After the victorious war, however, at the Treaty of San Stefano (1878), Russia was determined to create a Greater Bulgaria, which would have meant the annexation of sizeable lands inhabited by ethnic Albanians, and therefore the proposal posed a significant threat to the interests of the Ballhausplatz. At the same time, Great Britain was deeply concerned about the Straits. As a consequence, Vienna and London urged the other great powers to convene in Berlin in the summer of 1878 to revise the terms of the San Stefano Treaty. Greater Bulgaria was divided into three parts. Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania became internationally

recognized independent states, and the Monarchy received international authorization to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandjak of Novi Pazar. The Russian plans had come undone.

The question of the Albanians was not raised either in San Stefano or in Berlin, for most of the great powers did not even recognize the existence of the Albanian people. None of the great powers did anything to support the League of Prizren, an Albanian political and military organization created for defending the Albanian ethnic territories (the League was founded approximately a month before the Treaty of Berlin) (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010). However, the port of Ulcinj and the surrounding areas, the northeast corner of the ethnic Albanian lands, were annexed to Montenegro despite the military resistance of the League of Prizren (Anderson, 1966).

Italy and its Aspirations in Albania

The Congress of Berlin marked a turn in the relations of the great powers: in order to prevent a war with Russia, Berlin and Vienna created the Dual Alliance in 1879 and renewed it in 1881. Italy joined the Alliance in 1882, to form the Triple Alliance. When joining the Alliance, Italy recognized the status quo on the Balkans, but Germany and Austria-Hungary refused to accept Italy's great power ambitions in the Eastern Adriatic.

Rome, however, boldly took advantage of the unification of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria (1885) and the escalation of the German-French conflict: at the 1887 renewal of the Triple Alliance, a new article was incorporated into the original agreement at the request of Rome. Article 7 brought about a significant change: the Monarchy virtually consented to Italy becoming its rival in the Balkans (Pribram, 1920). Article 7 stipulates that Italy is to be compensated for any advantage, territorial or otherwise, which the Monarchy gains in the Balkans or the Ottoman coasts and islands in the Adriatic and the Aegean Sea (Schanderl, 1971). The Second Treaty of the Triple Alliance in 1887 was a huge diplomatic success for Italy: Southeast Europe in its entirety

became part of a new political and military constellation, and Rome was regarded as a potential great power of the Balkans (Behnen, 1985). After 1887, Italy could pursue an increasingly active Albanian policy (Bushati, 1940; Tittoni, 1928).

After their fiasco in Ethiopia (1895), the value of the Eastern Mediterranean greatly appreciated for the Italians. The Italian political press coined the term “mare nostro”, which quickly found its way into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The public urged the government to pursue a new Albanian policy. After 1896, Italy was no longer satisfied with the positions it had gained around the conference tables, and it wished that the other great powers recognize the country as their equal regarding its presence in the Balkans. Around the turn of the century, the Italian government invested increasing funds into asserting their interests in Albania, in an attempt to compete with the cult protectorate of the Monarchy in the areas of culture, press, religion, and trade. Simultaneously, Italian private corporations (banks, naval and trade companies) discovered the opportunities offered by investing in the eastern coast of the Adriatic, which marked the onset of the rivalry between Italy and Austria–Hungary for gaining influence over the West Balkans (Löhr, 1992).

A Shift in the Austro–Hungarian Albanian Policy (1896)

While initially the Balkan policy of the Ballhausplatz proved successful, the Monarchy later went on to lose influence over the countries of the Balkan Peninsula, mostly because the great powers allied during the 1880s placed constraints on the Austro-Hungarian aspirations in Southeast Europe in order to protect their own foreign political interests. As the establishment of the Mediterranean Entente (Vienna–London–Rome) in 1887 failed to live up to the expectations, in order to maintain the *status quo*, the Monarchy had no choice but to cooperate with Russia and Italy, the two other great powers showing interest in the Balkan Peninsula. It is important to note that the small countries of the Balkans that had gained independence successfully took advantage of the latitude offered

by the alliances of the great powers and thus further restricted the opportunities the Monarchy had in pursuing its foreign policy (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010; Demeter, 2007).

Albania gained primary importance for the Monarchy during the 1890s (Siebertz, 1910; Riedl, 1906; Ramhardter, 1989), and on the eve of the turn of the century, the Ballhausplatz articulated the need for a new Albanian policy. On the one hand, the new policy was necessary to keep the Italian aspirations at bay; on the other hand, the Ballhausplatz held that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was only a matter of time and did not wish to lose its influence on the eastern coast of the Adriatic to a rival (Blumenthal, 1963).

In November and December 1896, Joint Minister of Foreign Affairs Agenor Gołuchowski convened a three-day conference for the officials and experts of the Joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Joint Ministry of Finance, and he tasked them with working out the new policy (Schwanda, 1965; Schanderl, 1971). All the participants agreed that the only possibility for the Monarchy to realize a more pronounced representation of its interests was through the status of a cult protectorate. To accomplish that, Austria-Hungary had to heavily rely on the help of the local Catholic church. However, despite the regular subventions sent by Vienna, the clergy of Northern Albania sympathized with Italy, since most missions were led by Italian Franciscans. The other order of considerable influence, the Jesuits, also failed to strengthen the Albanians' trust in the Monarchy. Thus, the Albanian policy pursued up to the turn of the century did not establish an Albanian church system loyal to the Monarchy despite the heavy investments that had been made (more precisely, the episcopate was loyal to Vienna, but the lower clergy were not).

At the conference, a new strategy was put forward to win the support of the Albanian clergy: it was decided that the education of the members of the secular clergy would take place in Austrian seminaries, and that Vienna would attempt to secure the Vatican's support in questions concerning the Albanian church. Gołuchowski also decided to increase the amount of the subventions granted to the

local Albanian church (these amounts were later further increased in 1902, 1909, and 1912) (Schanderl, 1971). The decision-makers at the conference altered their earlier education strategy, and from then on the teaching positions of the schools funded by the Monarchy could only be filled with people approved by the consulates of Austria–Hungary, and these teachers had to use textbooks written in Albanian.

The education reforms were implemented during the first few years of the twentieth century. This policy overtly supported the strengthening of the Albanian national consciousness, since the interests of the Monarchy were not in conflict with Albanian nationalism. On the contrary, Vienna wished to lay down the foundations of an independent, anti-Italian, and anti-Serbian Albania in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire (Schanderl, 1971; Schwanda, 1965; Skendi, 1967). Gołuchowski also supported Albanian nationalism by setting up new consulates. The training of the consuls assigned to Albania had also been reformed with a view to enabling the officials to play a more significant political role in the region, and they were ordered to win the loyalty of the local Albanian dignitaries, including Muslim notabilities (Hecht, 1951). To this end, the Monarchy annually raised the amount of the subventions paid to Albanian dignitaries, of which now the Muslim Great Houses and Beys also received their share. The new measures strengthened the political and cultural positions of the Monarchy in the Albanian territories of the Adriatic coast.

In the years following the conference (1896–1906), several memoranda and reports were written on the territories inhabited by Albanians. These memoranda were mostly assessments that provided a snapshot of the social development of the Albanians and summarized what opportunities Austria-Hungary had in the region. Furthermore, these texts contained action plans through which the Monarchy endeavoured to fuel the Albanian national sentiment and aspired to increase the Austro–Hungarian presence in Albania to meet its own imperial needs. The efforts in connection with the action plans were coordinated by Julius von Zwiedinek, the official in charge of Albanian affairs (ÖHHStA PA, XIX; Csaplár-Degovics, 2008).

The key figures who played crucial roles in the implementation of these so-called Albanian action plans were Theodor Ippen, seasoned Austro-Hungarian Consul General of Shkodër, who had the most thorough knowledge of Albania, and Lajos Thallóczy, a Hungarian scholar and official with expertise in both the theory and practice of nation-building (as the confidant of Joint Minister of Finance Benjamin Kállay, Thallóczy had been the key figure and main theoretician of the nation and state-building process in Bosnia-Herzegovina).

The Link Between the Albanian National Movement and the New Policy of the Monarchy

The success of the Albanian action plans that were launched in 1896, however, was dependent on how the Albanians imagined their future rather than on the intentions of the Ballhausplatz.

The Eastern Crisis was a profound experience for the Albanian people, who may have comprised four denominations, two major dialects, and many parallel societies, but who also had a very strong sense of ethnic community. For the first time during the reign of the Ottoman Empire, it became a possibility that the neighbouring peoples would divide up the ethnic Albanian territories. In 1878, a supra-religious military alliance was created in the form of the League of Prizren, an occurrence that had been unprecedented in history. The League joined forces with the Ottoman troops and engaged in battle with the Southern Slav and Greek armies (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010). Although for various reasons the League was doomed to fail, the effect it had on Albanian history can be compared to the influence of the 1848–1849 War of Independence on the history of Hungary. The Albanian national movement was born, and its prominent members simultaneously strove to reform the old Empire and to develop the new Albanian national thought, following patterns borrowed from Europe. However, there were also Albanian interest groups that no longer believed in the possibility of reforming the empire and sought another solution.

In the coastal Albania of the 1890s, rumours that the fall of the Ottoman Empire was imminent started to spread among the formerly loyal Muslim Albanians. Their concern for the Albanian lands, and the aspirations of the neighbouring nation states prompted the Albanian noblemen holding high civilian or military offices in the capital to create a secret organization. Several organizations with similar intentions were soon established in central and southern Albania. The major objective of these associations was to promote the national thought and the use of the mother tongue.

The conviction soon gained ground within these circles that the Albanians' deficiencies in the national movement and culture, their dissent, and the menace represented by the neighbouring peoples deprived the Albanian people of their opportunity to create their national and administrative unity by their own means. As a consequence, the creation of said unity was only believed to be made possible under the protection of a benevolent European great power. Accordingly, in the early spring of 1896, Pasha Ferit Vlora, the leader of the Albanian patriots in Constantinople, and his brother, Syrja Vlora requested an appointment with Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Heinrich Calice. The Pasha asked the ambassador about the Monarchy's plans in Albania and confidentially shared with him his own thoughts on the subject. The Albanian nobleman told Calice that Albanian Muslims' confidence in the Monarchy had increased, and they were ready to accept the patronage of Vienna, hoping that it would protect them from the other peoples of the peninsula (ÖHHStA PA, XIX).

During the visit, Ferit Vlora gave a memorandum to Calice. The importance of this document can hardly be overemphasized: a Muslim aristocrat of the Ottoman Empire requested protection for the Albanian Muslims against their own Sultan and Caliph from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a European great power that clearly posed a threat to the Ottoman Empire. Also, the memorandum was much more than a written request for general protection. It contained a quite detailed political agenda and was used as the golden standard during the above-mentioned Vienna Conferences in November and December 1896, as well as during the drafting of the Austro-Hungarian action plans for Albania (ÖHHStA PA, XIX).

Syrja Vlora added several other specific ideas to his brother's memorandum. Syrja had no doubt that the Ottoman Empire would soon lose its control in Europe:

“We the Albanians, know very well that sooner or later the Turkish rule in Europe will end. The Epirotes will be taken by Greece, the Bulgarians will join Bulgaria, and the Serbians will go to Serbia. But what about us, the Albanians? As I know the sentiment of my fellow Albanian patriots well, the most favourable for us would be to fall under the protectorate of Austria–Hungary, through the creation of an autonomous province. Italy has never been popular among us, despite the propaganda of some Catholic priests and Italian diplomats in Albania. If we as Muslims must be integrated under a foreign government because for the moment we do not possess the necessary maturity to establish an independent Albania, we prefer Austria–Hungary over any other foreign power. Even the lowest strata of our people know that the Austro–Hungarian government respects our religion and customs [in Bosnia–Herzegovina; comment by K. Cs-D.]. The salvo of the cannons in Sarajevo that marks the beginning of the Ramadan have made quite an impression here” (ÖHHStA PA, XIX).

Syrja Vlora ultimately believed that the most expedient solution would be the creation of an independent province under Austro–Hungarian protectorate. Syrja also called attention to the fact that those dedicated to the national thought were not to be found in the northern, Catholic parts of Albania, but in the Muslim and Orthodox territories that had been formerly “neglected” by the Monarchy (ÖHHStA PA, XIX). In his telegram sent to the Ballhausplatz in 1897, Syrja Bey Vlora went even further and argued for the creation of an independent Albanian state under Austro–Hungarian protectorate (Clayer, 2009).

The officials of the Ballhausplatz took the requests of the Vlora brothers most seriously, as they were aware that Ferit Vlora's memorandum and Syrja Vlora's statement represented much more than the private opinions of two Albanian noblemen. Their ideas and plans were backed

up by the influential House of Vlora, their clientele, and several of the central and south Albanian Great Houses, which were in kinship with the Vloras. The appearance of these Albanian aristocrats, who were not from the traditional sphere of influence of Austria–Hungary, and their attempt to approach the Monarchy triggered a series of events that were indispensable in laying down the foundations of the modern Albanian nation.

*A Textbook Written in Albanian:
Lajos Thallóczy's History Book (1898)*

Between 1896 and 1912, the consulates of the Monarchy had a thousand links to the Albanian national movement, and the officials of the Monarchy started to prepare the Albanian noblemen and certain intellectuals for performing the tasks required by an independent state and nation. In doing so, however, the consuls of Austria–Hungary remained in the background, and most members of the Albanian national movement had no cognizance whatsoever of their activity as external ethnic entrepreneurs (Csaplár–Degovics, 2010).

It would be a mistake to believe that this was a unilateral relationship. Even though the officials of the Monarchy passed on important logistic and organizational expertise to the Albanians and provided considerable funds for the national movement, the Albanians made their own decisions in important matters. The Ballhausplatz negotiated every significant and symbolic issue with the members of the national movement and treated the Albanians as their equal partners. The Albanians accepted the support for three reasons. First, because the Monarchy was the only great power that did not expel or oppress its Muslim subjects. Second, the Albanians were aware that the Monarchy had several ethnic, denominational, internal political, and economic issues, and consequently it would never be able to pursue an imperialist policy as consistently as Italy or Russia. Third, because the Europhile Albanian aristocrats knew that the strategic interests of the Monarchy and the Albanians were not in conflict, in fact, they were perfectly aligned (Csaplár–Degovics, 2012).

Between 1896 and 1912, Vienna supported the creation of a new national alphabet, which was accepted by members of the Albanian national movement at their Congress of Monastir in 1908, it cultivated the Albanian national literature (journals and other periodicals in Brussels, Bucharest, and Sofia: *Albanie, Drita, Drituria*), increased the number of Albanian schools within the cult protectorate, also in the Muslim territories, and set out to forge a national unity out of the formerly heterogenous Albanian society. The most important tool of the Monarchy in reaching the latter goal was Lajos Thallóczy's book *The History of Albania Written by a Gheg Who Loves His Country* (Thallóczy, 1898). This book was the first to offer a systematic overview of several elements that characterised the Albanian view of history and national self-image. It became the cornerstone of the official state perspective of history and had a direct influence on the work of Albanian historians until the late 1990s (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010).

The book was first published in 1898, which is a symbolic date. The Monarchy launched its first large-scale Albanian action plan in 1896, with the purpose of fostering and strengthening Albanian national sentiments among Muslim Albanians as well. The idea of creating or establishing and strengthening a shared historical consciousness among Muslims and Christians, Tosks, and Ghegs was probably the brainchild of Theodor Ippen, Consul General of Shkodër. In 1897, he asked Joint Minister of Foreign Affairs Agenor Gołuchowski to support the publication of a popular textbook on the history of Albania in the Albanian language. The purpose of the textbook was to present the glorious Albanian national history (which is not identical with the history of the Ottoman Empire), and to create a uniform Albanian alphabet and spelling rules. According to Ippen, the book was easy to prepare, as Lajos Thallóczy, the Archive Director of the Joint Ministry of Finance, had for decades been collecting sources on the history of the Balkan peoples, and so the necessary material was readily available (ÖHHStA PA, XIV; Beluli, 2008).

Gołuchowski accepted and supported the proposal on two conditions: the history book could not contain anti-Ottoman material, and it could never come to light that the Monarchy had anything to do with it. Thallóczy was happy to take on the task, and by September 1898 he

had completed the German-language manuscript; a few months later 600 copies were printed of the version translated into the Albanian language. The author's name was not displayed on the cover, and the only information provided was that the author spoke the northern dialect, that is, he was a “Gheg”. The place of publication was indicated to be Alexandria. Ippen and Thallóczy carefully planned the distribution of the book in Albania. The costs of the first edition were covered by Joint Minister of Finance Benjámín Kállay, and the invoices were issued to Lajos Thallóczy (ÖHHStA PA, XIV; Beluli, 2008).

The national archive of Vienna holds several sources on the positive reception of the book and the religious and occupational composition of its Albanian readership (ÖHHStA PA, XIV). How this work affected the members of the Albanian national movement at the time is yet to be explored. The volume was undoubtedly popular: the Albanian language borrowed many of the words and expressions used in the book, national ideology utilized its ideas, and as illustrated by the development of Albanian historiography in the twentieth century, it became the source of several historical myths (e.g. the “empire” of Ali Pasha of Tepelena as the herald of a future Albanian state) (ÖHHStA PA, XIV; Csaplár-Degovics, 2010). Thallóczy's writing presumably became part of the school curriculum in the schools of the cult protectorate.

The Long-Term Consequences of Austria–Hungary's Albanian Policy

As a result of the successful cooperation between the Monarchy and Albania, the theoretical foundation of Albanian nation-building was laid down prior to World War I, although the actual national awakening and the country's independence remained the objective of a handful of Albanian patriots (Bartl, 2000). Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) brought about the fall of the Ottoman Empire, most Albanians were unprepared for the birth of an independent Albania. On the one hand, they were shocked by the rapid defeat of the army of the Ottoman Empire; on the other hand, it was difficult to sever the ties with

the Empire of the Sultan and the Caliph after 500 years (Csaplár-Degovics, 2009; Vlora, 1968). In any case, history did not give time for the majority of Albanians to get used to the idea of independence, and the Balkan Wars forced the hands of both the members of the Albanian national movement and the foreign ministries of the Adriatic powers.

The independence of the state was finally declared on 28 November, 1912 by Ismail Qemali, a cousin to the Vloras, who, as opposed to his relatives, enjoyed prestige among the Albanians at the national level. As a politician, Qemali was one of the leading figures of the Young Turk Movement. Pressured by the Adriatic Powers, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, the ambassadors at the London Conference recognised the new, sovereign, and neutral state of Albania on 29 July, 1913. What is more, the great powers agreed to place the new state under their protectorate (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010). Even though the decisions made at the Conference divided Albanian ethnic lands into two, it was these same decisions that allowed the Albanians to create their own state in Southeast Europe (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010). Although state-building between 1912 and 1914 had failed (Puto, 1987, 1978, 2009; Bylykbashi, 1977-1978; Gurakuqi, 2012) due to the destabilization policies of the neighbouring countries, Serbia and Greece, and the conflicts between the great powers, the Austro-Hungarian, Italian, and French occupation zones formed during World War I provided four more years' worth of experience to the Albanian aristocrats on how to properly operate the new administration. By the time the peace treaties that ended World War I had been signed, the Albanian political elite had acquired eight years' worth of experience in state-building, on top of the experience they had gained as part of the administration of the Ottoman Empire. After 1918, it was still in the interest of the great powers to maintain a neutral Albania, and the country could reap the benefits of this experience in the interwar period (Guy, 2012).

After 1920, Ahmet Zogu, an ambitious Albanian aristocrat, who had received an education in Istanbul and Vienna, gradually seized full control of the country. As President (1925) and later as King of Albania (1928), he had to choose who he would be relying on to build his political power. He could not count on the former Young Turks, since they were hesitant about choosing the modern Albanian or the Turkish national identity.

The local warlords only had experience in starting uprisings against the central power, and they were of little help to Zogu because he needed leaders who were aware not only of the internal challenges of the new state but also of the threat posed to Albania by Italy, Greece, and the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia. There was only one political group, the former supporters of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, that had a wide enough intellectual horizon to understand the complexity of the situation and that could traditionally pursue a successful policy against the three neighbouring countries (Csaplár–Degovics, 2016).

Zogu therefore partly based the foundations of his autocratic system on this group. In order to keep the state administration under control, Zogu appointed four Inspector-Generals, two of whom had been officers of the Joint Austro–Hungarian army. Gustav von Mürdacz was of Austro–German origin (Elsie, 2001), while the Croatian Leopold Ghilardi represented the Hungarian half of the former Monarchy (the other two Generals were British) (Elsie, 2001). Among the ministers and financial leaders of the new state there were several individuals with strong connections to the Ballhausplatz, including Eqrem Vlora (Syrja Vlora’s son, an ambassador in Paris and London) and Zef Curani (member of the Supervisory Committee of the Albanian National Bank and the translator of Lajos Thallóczy’s book).

Still, why could Zogu build his power on the former adherents of the Monarchy? Partly because the Austro–Hungarian occupation during World War I was not a negative experience for Albania. Also, it was between the two World Wars that the majority of the Albanian political elite finally understood that the contribution of the Monarchy to the Albanian nation and state-building process had greatly shaped the future of their country, and without it they may not have achieved independence. Italy’s designs to extend total control over Albania between 1927 and 1932 made this absolutely clear. After 1927, the Italian government utilized various tools in a grand attempt to turn Albanian national sentiments into an Italophile identity. Their programme bore a resemblance to the one initiated by the Monarchy in 1896. Their delay, however, thwarted their plans, as the first two phases of the nation-building had finished by 1927. The Albanian national identity had already gained strength, and its creators

had decades-long state-building traditions to rely on. In retrospect, Rome lost the cultural war for Albania against Vienna and Budapest (Basciani, 2011).

Why could the Albanian nation and state-building continue in accordance with the Austro-Hungarian programme? The answer is simple: in the interwar period Zogu still sent his ministers and confidants to Vienna or Budapest for help. Austria usually provided money and military advisors to the Tirana government, while Budapest sent agricultural and medical experts. The falling apart of the Monarchy did not cause a break in the ranks of the Albanian expert-officials, who continued their work until the 1930s. During these decades, the work of the government's expert-officials was complemented by the activities of the second great generation of Austro-Hungarian Albanologists in Vienna (e.g. Norbert Jokl) (Elsie, 2001). The scholars of this second generation kept their eyes on the students arriving from Albania on state scholarships. The bequest of August Kral (1869–1955), an official of the Vienna Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Consul General in Shkodër (*Jahrbuch des k. u. k. Auswärtiges Dienstes*, 1917) provides evidence that these scholars not only organised education and arranged accommodation for the Albanian students, but they also supported their personal development (ÖHHStA PA, XIX). Beyond the Austro-Hungarian historical traditions, the students could also familiarise themselves with modern Albanology by reading, among other important works, Lajos Thallóczy's history textbook (Csaplár-Degovics, 2010).

Over time, the Albanian students returned home, and after 1945 they integrated what they had learnt in Vienna into the ideology of Communist Albania. These former students were some of the few individuals who had received an education abroad and whom Enver Hoxha did not automatically have liquidated or sent to internment camps. Those scholars who could not leave the country in time (and were not executed) eventually found their place in the new structure. Writers and poets, for example, were not allowed to write their own works, but they could translate classic literary works into Albanian. Historian Aleks Buda (1910–1993), who also studied in Vienna, became Hoxha's personal friend and an all-powerful ideologist of Albanian

historiography. Aleks Buda was the main theoretician of the Albanian national self-image and Albanian national thought in Communist Albania. If one compares Buda's writings with Lajos Thallóczy's above-mentioned book of 1896, one will quickly discover identical passages. Aleks Buda in fact did little more than add a few elements to the canon Thallóczy had created. This updated national ideology was made public in 1968, when Tirana commemorated the 500th anniversary of Skanderbeg's death with a series of celebratory events. At the conference of 12 January, 1968, which marked the beginning of the commemorative year, two speeches seemed to canonize for good the Albanian perspective on history that had been developed by Thallóczy (Shehu, 1968). The first speech was delivered by Prime Minister Mehmet Shehu, the second was made by Aleks Buda. These speeches provided the ideological framework that prevailed in Albanian historiography until the end of the 1990s (Csaplár-Degovics, 2008).

In Hungary, on the other hand, the country's previous relations with Albania were almost completely consigned to oblivion after 1918. Only a few groups of aristocrats, major banks (e.g. the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest), and certain marginal Turanist groups cultivating the memory of the Monarchy (e.g. the members of the Gül Baba Cultural Committee that operated along the first Hungarian Islamic congregation) remembered and kept alive some fragments of the once successful Albanian policy. However, after 1945, these social groups also disappeared, so the traditions of Austro-Hungarian Albanology disintegrated in Hungary and were only revived around the turn of the millennium.

Conclusion and Epilogue: The Albanian Heritage of the Monarchy, and its Afterlife in the Successor States of Austria and Hungary

When investigating the heritage of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, two long-term benefits can certainly be identified. First, the decades-long efforts of the Ballhausplatz resulted in the creation of the independent

Albanian nation-state in 1912–1913, and the same efforts allowed the new state to find its place within the delicately balanced community of the Balkan nation-states.

Second, the science of modern Albanology was also born in the Habsburg Monarchy. From the 1850s on, the Habsburg consuls serving in Albanian territories started to pursue scientific and scholarly activities and investigated the language, folklore, and history of the formerly almost completely unknown Albanian community (Hahn, 1853). Once the interest of the great powers arose, the most prominent Balkanologists of the era, such as the Czech Konstantin Jireček, the Croatian Milan Šufflay, and the Hungarian Lajos Thallóczy also participated in the exploration of Albanian history (Thallóczy, 1916; Thallóczy, Jirecek & Sufflay, 1913–1918). By the turn of the century, Albanology had been widely recognised and acquired a firm position among philological studies.

Although Albanology was originally not the by-product of the policy of the great powers, it was in a symbiotic relationship with the policy of the Ballhausplatz after 1896, and the officials of the Joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarded Albanology an imperial discipline. In 1911, Head of Department Karl Macchio noted in a summary intended for internal use only that Albanology (cultivated by Ferenc Nopcsa, among others) played the exact same role for the Monarchy as Egyptology played for France and Mesopotamian studies for Great Britain. All these branches of science became significant because the great powers were interested in the Orient, and without financially supporting these disciplines, none of the great powers' politics could ever be complete (ÖHHStA PA, XIV).

The Austrian heritage manifested in its contribution to the Albanian state-building process. Following the collapse of the Monarchy in 1918, the Austrian governments and citizens continued to participate in the organisation of the Albanian armed forces and in the development of the financial sector. The Albanian intellectuals and professionals who received their education in twentieth-century Austria greatly contributed to Albania becoming a viable state despite the prophecies of the elites of the neighbouring nation-states. They also played a key

role in ensuring that the original Austro-Hungarian ideas of state and nation-building continued to have an impact until the 1960s (Csaplár-Degovics, 2019).

Although only a few minor social groups kept alive the memory of the Monarchy's Albanian policy in Budapest after 1918, Albania still regarded Hungary as the successor state of the Dual Monarchy. As a consequence, to date Geraldina Apponyi has been the only crowned queen of Albania. It was also this Albanian perspective of Hungary that had made it possible for Hungarian agricultural experts and botanists to regularly visit this secluded country and participate in the reorganization of Albania's economy in the late 1940s and the 1950s (Barina & Pifkó, 2019). Also, in the first decades of Communist dictatorship, as a token of their trust, high-ranking members of the Albanian Communist Party choose to undergo life-saving surgeries in Hungary when Albanian professionals could not perform the procedures in Tirana.

The most remarkable part of the legacy of the Monarchy was the export of the Hungarian nation-building experience through Lajos Thallóczy's books and the successful adaptation of it in the first, decisive decades of the development of the modern Albanian nation. This occurrence was all the more singular since Hungarians and Albanians were not neighbouring peoples, and they belonged to Empires (i.e. the Ottoman Empire and Austria–Hungary) that left behind entirely different sociocultural heritages.

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XIX. Nachlässe

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