

AUSTRIAN-HUNGARIAN MILITARY ADMINISTRATION IN ALBANIA DURING WORLD WAR I

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Abstract: In January 1916, the Austro-Hungarian Army took the offensive in the Balkans. The Austro-Hungarian troops entered Shkodra on 23 January, 1916, and during the course of the following months occupied Albanian territory up to the River Vjosa-Lake Ohrid in Southern Albania, controlling more than two-thirds of the country. The rest of the Albanian territory was occupied by Italian and Greek troops in the south, French troops in the southeast, and Bulgarian troops in parts of the east.

Before crossing the border, the Austrians had declared that they were not coming as enemies but as friends and that Christians and Muslims would be protected in the same way. The occupied territory was considered a rear area that was to complete certain military duties. Despite the previous opinion announced in March 1916 stating the opposite, the approved regulation ordered the creation of a military administration on 19 April, 1916. This study analyses the establishment of the military administration in the occupied territories as well as some of the main measures undertaken during World War I in the Austrian-Hungarian occupied territories, including the registration of the population.

Keywords: Albania, World War I, population census, military administration

Introduction

During World War I (WWI), the strategic objectives of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were flexible and easily modified according to the situation on the war fronts and the international scene. Scholars of the Dual Monarchy acknowledge that at the outbreak of the war in 1914, few of its leaders had any specific war aims in mind beyond the military defeat and political subjugation of Serbia. The fear that a Great Serbia would emerge (backed by Russia) was the original cause of the war for the Monarchy. However, the global escalation of the conflict brought the Balkan motives of war in a wider context of international relations. This threatened the Habsburg Empire with grave territorial losses, or even dissolution (Piahanau 2014, p. 97). As it became clear that the war would not be as short as originally hoped, the Austro-Hungarian leadership began to develop detailed war aims, which formed the subject of furious debate at the highest echelons of power. Initially, the military focused on battlefield successes in Serbia and Galicia, while the diplomats concentrated on preventing hostile interventions by Italy and Romania (Fried 2015, p. 117-118).

In 1914, the Hungarian political leaders sought the best possible solution in dominating the Balkans after annexing territories in Serbia and Romania, or at least maintaining the status quo of the pre-war borders. Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza opposed increasing the Slavic population in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whilst Austrian leaders such as Chief of General Staff Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf “felt that the Balkans should be the Monarchy’s first priority” and proposed large annexations in the Balkan peninsula (Fried, 2014, p.13), as according to him political and military hegemony over Serbia and the Balkan peninsula was a vital war aim (Fried 2015, p. 218). The war aims were further influenced by the fears of Italy’s interference in the coastal areas of Albania and Montenegro, which were slipping out of the control of the Monarchy, as it lost influence to Italy in Albania and was already fighting a war against Montenegro.

Foreign Minister Leopold Berchtold and General von Hötzendorf were on the same page regarding the war aims in terms of using military hegemony over Serbia. However, due to his weakness in dealing with

Italy, Romania, and even the Bulgarian intervention, Berchtold was replaced by a close friend of Prime Minister Tisza, Hungarian Baron István Burián, in early 1915 (Fried, 2014, p. 3). Prime Minister Tisza and Baron Burián, both defenders of Hungarian interests within the Monarchy, supported the accession of northwest Serbia to Hungary and populating it by Hungarians, and they pushed forward a project of “Great Albania”, which would include the ethnic Albanian territories of Montenegro and Serbia. By building an “independent” Albania under Austro-Hungarian protectorate, Burián wanted to improve the security of the Monarchy in the Otranto Straits. The Crown Council eventually adopted the Hungarian view on Albania (Piahanau, 2014, p. 95-107, 98).

Vienna did not aim to annex the entire Albanian territory, only to strengthen its influence in this region to oppose and somehow block Serbian, Montenegrin, and Italian influence. The Dual Monarchy had supported the independence of Albania back in 1912, as it could prevent Serbia’s expansion in the Balkans and its access to the Adriatic Sea. Hence the Albanians and their territory could serve as a bastion against Slavic expansion. He limited his primary interest to northern and northeast Albania. The Habsburgs insisted on stopping Serbia from gaining access to the Adriatic Sea, and Belgrade was not to move towards the Albanian territory. Both Vienna and Italy had already agreed in late 1912 and early 1913 to an independent Albania to be recognized internationally. This meant that Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece would lose parts of the Albanian territory that they had claimed during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). If the Albanians remained alone, they would be too weak to withstand the collision with Slavism. However, if they were part of a great power like Austria-Hungary, they could become valuable allies. They would substantially restrict the Serbian-Bulgarian expansionist desires, and, in the hands of the Monarchy, they could acquire a position that would make it impossible for Russian-protected Slavism to fight in the Balkan peninsula if it was within the sphere of interest of Austria-Hungary (Skendi 2015, p. 238).

In early January 1916, the k.u.k. 3rd Army (Imperial and Royal Armed Forces) took the offensive in the Balkans. After invading Montenegro, the 19th Corps, supported by the 8th Corps, invaded Northern Albania, as Italian

troops had already invaded Southern Albania in 1915, and the Austrian-Hungarians also launched this campaign to prevent the Italian advance toward the north (Jung, 2003, p.13).

The Austro-Hungarian troops entered Shkodra on 23 January, 1916, where they were welcomed by the population, as they were considered friends due to the contribution of Austria-Hungary in the recognition of the independence of Albania and the animosity towards Serbia and Montenegro. Before crossing the border, the Austrians had declared that they were not coming as enemies but as friends and that Christians and Muslims would be protected in the same way. During the course of the following months, the Austro-Hungarian troops occupied Albanian territory up to the defensive line along the River Vjosa-Lake Ohrid in Southern Albania, established by the Austro-Hungarian battalions supported by local Albanian volunteers (Jung, 2003, p.13), controlling more than two-thirds of the country. The villages close to the River Vjosa found themselves on the front line between the armies of Italy and Austro-Hungary until the final assault by Entente forces in September 1918 (Nicholson 2015, p. 248-249). The rest of the Albanian territory was occupied by Italian and Greek troops in the south, French troops in the southeast, and Bulgarian troops in parts of the east. This situation persisted until the end of the war.

The Austrian-Hungarian occupation of Albania, the establishment of a military administration, and the measures taken by this administration have been studied by many scholars. Various aspects of the occupation regime were discussed at a conference organized in Tirana in January 2018, and the conference papers were published in an edited volume in 2019 (*Austro-Hungaria dhe Shqipëria*, 2019).

The aim of this study is to analyse the establishment of the military administration in the occupied territories as well as some of the measures undertaken during World War I in the Austrian-Hungarian occupied territories of Albania, including the registration of the population.

Establishing Administrative Structures in the Occupied Territories

Describing the entry of the Austro-Hungarian army in Shkodra, Georg Veith, Artillery Commander of the Austro-Hungarian army, gives a detailed description of the military campaign in the Albanian territories: "The reception of the k.u.k. troops by Albanians, as it was to be expected considering their enmity towards Serbs and even more towards Montenegrins, was extremely friendly; everywhere the population took up arms to participate in the further advancement" (Veith, 1922, p. 518).

Immediately after invading the country, Austria-Hungary began the work to establish its own administration and govern its occupation zone. The 19th Corps Command operated in Albania, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the *Ballhausplatz*) intended to treat Albania not as occupied enemy country but as a neutral country, and therefore there would be no need to establish a military administration (Schwanke 1982, p. 101). On 22 February, 1916 the Austro-Hungarian Army Supreme Command announced regarding the treatment of the local population:

We have entered Albania not as enemies. The population trusts us. We should use this trust to consolidate the power of Austria-Hungary in the country, not to make the population nervous through attacks, unjustified requisitions, rudeness, and unnecessary reprisals. All offenders must be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

The protection of the churches and respecting the mosques, the domiciliary rights of Muslims, respect for the traditions and customs of inhabitants, respect for women - everything that should characterise us as the army of a civilised state - should be strongly encouraged.

Let us face Albanians as Friends and treat them as such!

This order shall be subject to urgent instruction for all companies (Nicolo, 1918, p. 3).

The Austro-Hungarian army did not find consolidated regular administrative structures in Northern Albania. Since the proclamation of the independence of Albania in 1912 and the recognition of an Albanian state by the great powers in 1913, the country had been experiencing the turmoil of the Balkan Wars and the beginning of World War I, and it was occupied by different armies of the neighbouring countries. In the absence of administrative institutions, a city government composed of the mayor, the deputy mayor, and 22 city counsellors was established in Shkodra for the regulation of daily issues, and it was responsible for order and security in the city. Furthermore, provisional administrations were established in other cities as well (Nicolo, 1918, p. 1).

The Albanian occupied territory was considered a rear area, which was supposed to complete certain military duties, such as securing peace and order behind the front and maintaining supply through the road and communication networks (Gostentschnigg, 2018, p. 496).

Regarding the establishment of a regular administration for the cities and villages in the occupied territories, the Army Supreme Command announced on 2 March, 1916 that there was no intention to establish a general military government for Albania. To maintain order and peace, rear area regulation¹ should apply, taking into consideration the existing institutions and the special population conditions in Albania. Based on this proposal, the Army Supreme Command proclaimed that

Since Albania is not to be considered an occupied enemy country, the establishment of a military administration in the occupied territories of Albania is not foreseen for the time being. Accordingly, it is not necessary to establish district commands; nonetheless, there is no objection for local commanders, through appropriate direction of reliable and influential locals, to positively influence the imminent

¹ The rear area regulation (*Etappenvorschrift*) approved in 1915 regulated administrative issues for the area between the front and the hinterland. See Scheer, T. (2009a). *Zwischen Front und Heimat. Österreich-Ungarns Militärverwaltungen im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, p. 57-59 and Schwanke, H. (1982). *Zur Geschichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Militärverwaltung in Albanien (1916-1918)* (PhD Thesis). University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria, p. 111-112.

establishment of administrative institutions and to stimulate and promote the establishment of such institutions (9 March, 1916) (Nicolo, 1918, p. 1).

The *Ballhausplatz* considered that “the Albanians were to be treated as a neutral people, who are friendly towards the Monarchy, who have no central power, and who could, through an administration that took the local circumstances into consideration, be put on the best course of becoming a civilised state” (Schwanke, 1982, p. 87-88). The first request for the establishment of an administration in Albania was made by the Highest Command on 16 March, 1916. The proposal foresaw the administrative division of the occupied territories based on the location of the military troops, the revival of the existing local administrative councils in Shkodra and Tirana for advisory purposes regarding economy issues, and the election of city administration in accordance with the traditional rights, as well as the appointment of a military representative. Other main principles included the organisation of the judiciary by establishing two military courts in Shkodra and one in Lezha and Tirana, setting up local courts with limited competences for civil and penal issues, and the organisation of the gendarmerie, finances, and religious and educational issues. The Army Supreme Command approved the proposal on 26 March, 1916, ordering the administrative divisions to be called districts, and that “since in Austria and Hungary there are different civil laws in force - in criminal matters only the military criminal law can be used” (Nicolo, 1918, p. 2).

The steps for the establishment of administrative structures in the occupied Albanian territories reflected the different views the Army Supreme Command and the *Ballhausplatz* had regarding the status of Albania. While the Army Supreme Command favoured the annexation of the occupied Albanian territory, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs aimed to create an Austrian-Hungarian protectorate of Albania.² These diverging views on the status of the occupied Albanian territories had a direct effect

2 On this topic, see Gostentschnigg, K. (2018). *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Militär. Die Österreichisch-ungarische Albanologie 1867-1918*, Springer VS, p. 458-459, 502-506; Milo, P. (2019). *Politika austro-hungareze ndaj Shqipërisë në vitet 1914-1918*. In *Austro-Hungaria dhe Shqipëria 1916-1918*. Tiranë: Muzeu Historik Kombëtar, p. 23-27.

on the military administration in Albania and caused animosity between the civil authorities under the direction of August Ritter von Kral, Director of the Civil Governing Board and the Austrian General Consul in Shkodra, and the military authorities (Gostentschnigg, 2018, p. 498).

On 19 April, 1916, the regulation of 16 March, 1916 was overturned, and a new revised regulation was published, entitled “General features for the administration in the central and northern Albanian country regions that fall under the Austrian-Hungarian interest sphere”. According to this regulation, the administration would be a military one, and all the local officials and bodies would be bound in their decisions by the approval of military officials (Nicolo, 1918, p 4). The reason for this decision was explained in the opening of the regulation:

The Army Supreme Command has disclosed under Op. Nr. 20835 ex 1916 that the establishment of a military administration in the occupied territories of Albania is not planned for the time being because Albania is not to be considered an occupied enemy country. Because in this country no administration in any form exists, but the initiation of regulated conditions in the country is a requirement of highest necessity, the Army Supreme Command has decided, referring to the current dislocation of troops, to create the framework of an administration (Nicolo, 1918, p. 4).

The Austrian-Hungarian Military Administration was headquartered in the town of Shkodra. The highest authorities were the Commander of the 19th Corps, Lieutenant General Ignaz Trollman von Lovćenberg, and the Director of the Civil Governing Board and the Austrian General Consul in Shkodra, August Ritter von Kral, as a representative of the *Ballhausplatz* in the military civil administration. Kral had held several consular positions both there and in the neighbouring countries, and he had been the Austro-Hungarian representative in the International Control Commission in 1914. He was a well-known career diplomat, who knew the country, its people and traditions very well (Pandelejmoni, 2019, p. 133). Some senior officers, who were known as *Albanerschwermern* (Albania swooners) in Vienna due to their continuous complaints about knowing Albania better than the experienced Balkan experts of the *Ballhausplatz*, considered Kral too moderate in his actions

in civil administration. They constantly complained to Vienna about the consul's interventions in favour of the local population. These senior officers disagreed with Kral as he sought to prevent actions that would provoke the locals into taking possibly violent countermeasures (Nicholson, 2015, p. 253). Due to these complaints, the former consul was summoned to Vienna, and the country was to be governed by the Military Command.

During March and April 1916, the 19th Corps Command responsible for the administration of the Albanian territories began to reorganise the internal security system of the area. Elements from the Austrian k.u.k. Gendarmerie helped organise and train the Albanian gendarmerie units and set up police units in towns such as Tirana and Elbasan. The army attempted to establish a new military system by creating Albanian militia on a territorial basis. Nine battalions, each comprised of four companies of 150 to 175 men, were formed during the course of 1916, and they remained active until 1918. The army officers came from the Austro-Hungarian Army, and in some cases certain northern tribesmen volunteered collectively with their chiefs in the army units. The Albanians usually wore regular Austro-Hungarian uniforms of field-grey material with a distinctive headgear, which could be either the Albanian white conical fez or a grey cylindrical fez displaying a cockade in the red/black national colours, although some volunteers continued to wear their national costumes. These *Albanienbatallione* served alongside the Austro-Hungarian forces against the Italians, the French, and the Greek until 1918 (Jung, 2003, p. 42).

The Military Administration was divided into regional, district, and sub-district headquarters. A prefect had to be nominated for each regional headquarter, an under-prefect (*Kaimakam*) for each district headquarter, and a director (*Mydir*) for each important sub-district. As a result of a shortage of qualified Albanian officials, some of these positions, especially those of prefects, remained vacant (Seiner, 1922, p. 1). The military area was divided into 6 prefectures and 25 subprefectures with 11 towns and 109 villages. A military officer stood at the head of the district, who administered the district together with local civil servants. In general, the 19th Corps Command was satisfied with the administration of the Albanian territories, and it also based its success on the support of locals. Only in the remote mountainous areas did the Austro-Hungarian military administration

encounter some difficulties due to a lack of order, as well as the control of Albanian local tribe leaders, who were hesitant to work with the Austro-Hungarian army (Pandelejmoni, 2019, p. 133).

During the course of establishing the administrative structures in Albania, Austria-Hungary attracted influential personalities and local leaders. The Civil Governing Board included prominent Albanians such as Luigj Gurakuqi (Minister of Education in the first Albanian government of 1912), who directed the Education Department, and Fejzi Bey Alizoti (Albanian politician, Minister in the Durrësi government of 1918), who was responsible for public finance. Albanian officials continued to work in the local administration. An Albanian gendarmerie was established, and Albanian schools were opened (Bartl, 1995, p.184). The inclusion and consolidation of local elites through measures on education, such as opening schools and setting up scholarships, aimed to create an elite loyal to Austria-Hungary. In an article on the ways local elites in the occupied Balkan countries were dealt with by Austria-Hungary during World War I, Scheer (2009b, p. 137) writes about the occupation as a space for the construction of elites through measures such as training courses for civil servants or officers.

The Albanian civil servants were salaried employees appointed by the Corps Commander, paid according to a graded scale and the number of their dependants, and they were required to work for at least three hours a day. The imposition of disciplined work was intended to have an “educational” effect on those employed, as were other requirements. However, not all civil servants were satisfied with their jobs, as usually the salaries were low, and their value was reduced by inflation (Nicholson, 2015, p. 257).

The role the policies of Austria-Hungary played in the establishment of elites in Albania is emphasized by Eqrem Bej Vlora, one of the Albanian notabilities who played an important role in Albanian political events during the first half of the twentieth century.³ In his memoirs, writing about the administration of the Albanian territories by Austria-Hungary and the inclusion of Albanians, Eqrem Bej Vlora states:

3 For a concise description of Eqrem Bej Vlora's political activities, see Gostentschnigg, K. (2018). *Wissenschaft im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Militär. Die Österreichisch-ungarische Albanologie 1867-1918*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, p.560-562.

Thanks to this joint Austrian-Albanian administration, the later Albanian state had the opportunity to build an official learned language, open the first elementary schools, and create the first elements of the category of civil servants. The Italian occupation definitely brought material gain for the country, but if after 1920 a more or less regular state was established and a national consciousness was created, it is something that we have to thank for the four years of military occupation by Austria-Hungary. Without the influence of this administration, Albanians most likely would have continued to offer their services to clients and flirted with dependent statuses from foreign people and countries (Vlora, 2001, p. 140).

Administration in Practice

The Military Administration undertook a series of measures in infrastructure, health, education, economy, and other fields, such as the construction of roads and bridges, the opening of schools, measures to control epidemics, and the proclamation of *Besa*⁴ in order to control blood feuds in the country. Measures were undertaken to control malaria: “the whole occupied territory was divided into malaria inspectorates, laboratories were opened, and the prophylaxis of mosquito repellent - for persons and housing - was carried out with relentless energy” (Veith, 1922, p. 538). A minor success was achieved with the demarcation of local borders between the regions, respecting the traditions, traditional tribal division, communication networks, and traditional trade networks (Kostka, 2007, p. 238). During the Austro-Hungarian military administration in Shkodra, the city bazaar was revived as an important trade and market place, which had been abandoned by its merchants and handicraftsmen after it had been burnt down during the Balkan Wars. The Austro-Hungarian

4 *Besa* literally means “to keep the promise,” and it is considered a pledge of honor according to Albanian customary law. A person who acts according to *Besa* is someone who keeps their word, someone one can trust one's life to.

military built “Bay Street” in 1917 to prevent the River Buna from flooding the bazaar (which typically happened in the autumn and the winter), and they paved the bazaar lanes with cobblestones (Pandelejmoni, 2013, p. 219).

The military administration approved a provisory building regulation for the towns of Shkodra, Lezha, Kruja, Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, and Berat, which required submitting a formal building request to the respective regional command (*Bezirkskommando*) before starting construction work. There was no such restriction for other localities, except for private buildings that could interfere with military interests. The regulation also required town plans to be prepared, where future streets, building plots, and building lines would be fixed (Nicolo, 1918, p. 37). Specific measures included building schools, combatting epidemics, conducting a census, as well as carrying out geological surveys to discover mineral resources (Rauchensteiner 2013, p. 763). Agricultural development was in an undeveloped state, and it was necessary to import food to Albania. The troops stationed in the country could only procure about half the meat and wood they needed, but the procurement of coal, asphalt, chrome ore, copper, iron ores, gold sand, sulphur, and salt was encouraged (Kerchnawe, 1928, p. 294). All these attempts needed a labour force, and for that reason local men were usually organised into work companies that worked for the army. The military command used the local labour force to engineer and build roads and railways, as well as urban construction, both for purely military purposes and to educate the locals, who were not accustomed to regular work and were considered *Arbeitsscheu* (workshy). Hence the military undertook a “civilising task” to recruit local labourers who were not needed to work in their family’s fields into the work companies of the army, for the benefit of the country. The Corps Command also mobilised the unemployed, evacuees, and the so-called *öffentliche Schmarotzer* (public parasites) for the transportation of supplies. From the port of Durrës and the military headquarters in the north, transport to the south and the front line was made by packhorse (Nicholson, 2015, p. 258). Due to work difficulties, their work in the fields, the low salaries, a “lack of duty”, dangerous work conditions, and the war, many Albanian labourers did not want to work for the military

and kept deserting. The Corps Command therefore issued orders to remind supervisors of their duties to ensure the workers had food and clothing and were not mistreated (Nicholson, 2015, p. 258).

Despite the various positive measures, the situation for the civil population was not easy. Veith describes the impact of the Austrian-Hungarian occupation as follows:

The situation became grave, first of all for the Albanian population, and thus indirectly for the k.u.k. troops. We came to the country as friends and liberators, and of course we had the good will to be a burden to the population as little as possible. This principle was not always possible to keep up, which impacted Albanians even more because obviously from the moment of the occupation by Austria-Hungary, all import from neighbouring countries stopped. Soon different parts of the country were threatened by famine, and the Austrian command was forced, instead of living on the land, to feed the population and to supply them with imported goods, which were scarce also in the homeland. (Veith, 1922, p. 526)

In his memoirs, Ferenc Nopcsa, a Hungarian scholar and Albanologist, who was an officer of the Austro-Hungarian military troops during the Albanian operation in 1915-1916,⁵ describes the misbehaviour of the Austro-Hungarian military troops in the Albanian-occupied territories. Beside incidents such as soldiers shooting a Muslim person in Golem during a requisition, he describes the devastation of many mosques in Shkodra. He states that he filed official reports on the incidents to the military command and to Kral, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but these reports were hidden from Corps Commander Trollmann. He continues to say that a series of other lawsuits referred to the k.u.k. troops and their commanders as thieves and gave examples of

5 On Nopcsa's participation in the Albanian military campaign in 1916, see Pollman, F. (2019). Baron Ferenc Nopcsa's Participation in the Albanian Military Campaign of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1916. In K. Csaplár-Degovics (Ed.), *These were hard times for Skanderbeg, but he had an ally, the Hungarian Hunyadi: Episodes in Albanian-Hungarian Historical Contacts*. Acta Balcano Hungarica 1. Budapest, Hungary: Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

exaggerated requisitions (Elsie, 2001, p. 448-449). Nopcsa was concerned about the implications that such behaviour by the k.u.k. troops would have for the image of Austria-Hungary among Albanians, especially among those who were true supporters (Elsie, 2001, p. 450).

One of the policies that caused dissatisfaction among Albanians was the collection of gold and silver coins. As Veith describes,

A very grave problem was monetary transaction. Paper money was completely unusable in the country, and even about the metallic Austrian silver krone the Albanian, who is sensitive in money issues, was strongly suspicious. He asked for payments in Turkish gold and silver, and prolonged negotiations and strong influence of friendly leaders were needed in order to at least exchange the silver. Later paper money was also used, but only under strong pressure and exclusively in the circulation between Austrians and Albanians; no Albanian would have accepted paper money from any other...

With time, the best means of payment became the so-called “compensation goods”, essential import goods, foremost sugar, rum, and gas; only with the help of these was it possible to keep up the economic circulation (Veith, 1922, p. 526-527).

Nopcsa showed how the presence of the military troops was used by traders to increase the price of products. The regulation of prices in Shkodra fell within the competence of the Intendantur, and the process was to be handled officially. Nopcsa described his efforts, upon the request of the Intendant, to identify those who abused prices as a difficult task because, as he found out later, “the traders asked their customers to promise not to reveal them”. He describes how the process took place in a record (report) taken with his confidant, which shows how he managed to buy food and at what prices (Elsie, 2001, p. 451-452).

In a meeting with Foreign Minister Burián in March 1916, which Nopcsa describes in his memoirs, he states that one of the issues he raised was that

Despite the order to secure products only through cash payments or on the basis of requisition tickets, there were still many things taken without a receipt. Moreover, it was impossible for the inhabitants, who were illiterate, to file a lawsuit regarding these matters. The few clerks in the city of Shkodra, whom the illiterate peasants asked to write a lawsuit, were warned not to write such because the Intendantur would be overflowed with such complaints (Elsie, 2001, p. 458-459).

The scarcity of products and the difficulty of trading with banknotes is described in the memoirs of various Austrian-Hungarian officers who travelled through Albania. The published memoirs of Josef Šrámek, a Czech textile worker enrolled in the Austro-Hungarian Army, who was captured by the Serbian army and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner, describe the retreat march through Albanian territories and the ordeals he faced. Writing about the days he spent in Prizren, he states: “If I had no money, I would have to sell my blankets as others did, or maybe even my shoes and walk barefoot. And I am lucky to have my cash in silver coins. Nobody wants bank notes; one can hardly sell them for 6 dinars” (Šrámek, 2012, p. 37). He continues by saying that “Steblova is a small village. We buy potatoes as small as cherries. Arnauts sell us baked pumpkins and corn flour, trading for underwear or boots.... I traded a little corn flour for a shirt and underwear. The Arnauts do not want Serb money. The boys trade flour for their last blankets” (Šrámek, 2012, p. 39-40).

Population Censuses for Military Purposes

After two months of invading most parts of the country, the 19th Corps Command undertook a provisional population census for military and administrative purposes. First, the military administration began to collect statistical data in order to reorganize the entire administrative system of the territory it controlled (Seiner, 1922, p. 3). After the administrative division of the military area into the districts of *Bezirk* (prefecture), *Kreis* (sub-prefecture), *Stationskommando* (municipality), and *Katund*

(village) on 19 March, 1916, a provisional population census was taken, linked to a livestock census and a survey of food supplies. The census, however, was incorrect and contained crucial mistakes. It was conducted in a rush, the settlements and villages were not delineated, and the population was not familiarized with the personnel administering the census and hesitated to respond to the questions (Pandelejmoni, 2013, p. 45). In contrast to this first attempt, another population census was carried out on 1 March, 1918. It was administered following one year of preparations by Franz Seiner, a census expert and statistician from Graz, who was sent to Albania to take over the post of Chief Census Official. Under Seiner's supervision, the collection of census data was carried out by officers of the Austro-Hungarian army, with assistance from the Albanian officers (Gruber, 2007, p. 254).

The population census of 1918 is of enormous importance not only because it was the first accurate population census ever undertaken in post-independence Albania, although it only stretched to the military territories administered by Austro-Hungary. It contains detailed information on all registered persons, and it is a valuable source for historic-demographic analyses of the Albanian population at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the first attempt to delineate settlements, fix the borders of villages, record the villages, and prepare an index with about 1,800 entries of villages, towns, and cities. With the intention of recording the population accurately and encouraging people not to under-report the number of children (by leaving out female children), the census officers were instructed to inform the population that the distribution of food supplies would be based on the census data. The efforts met with success, as the data reveal a gender balance of 252,794 men and 251,423 women (Pandelejmoni, 2013, p. 46).

Another census success was the establishing of a naming system for topographical locations, which at first appeared a very difficult task, since many locations had names in three or four languages, in Turkish, Italian, Albanian, or in Slavic, and there may have been significant differences in the pronunciation and spelling by villagers. In addition, many villages did not have a fixed communal name, only the village quarters had a name (*mahallë*). Hence, an Albanian Literary Commission (*Komisia letrare*) was established in Shkodra, which worked out guidelines for naming Albanian localities (Pandelejmoni, 2013, p. 47).

The *Komisia* further established family names and first names, as until then, few Albanian families had had a fixed family name. Generally, only first names were used to distinguish people, to which the names of the father and the patrilineal grandfather were often added. An additional problem was that many inhabitants in the villages did not have surnames, following the Ottoman custom, where the given name is followed by the father's given name. Therefore, it was made obligatory to choose a name for the purpose of the population census. The heads of the household were free to choose their name, which were only rarely suggested by the administration; the guidelines for this process were worked out by Albania specialist Maximilian Lambertz (Pandelejmoni, 2013, p. 47).

In the end, the census area comprised 20,096 km² (of the 28,784 km² making up the country). 524,217 inhabitants lived at a density of 26 inhabitants per square kilometre in towns and villages in the territory administered by Austro-Hungary during World War I (Seiner 1922, p.6). The whole census material was transported to Shkodra and stored safely. By the end of September 1918, the data had been double-checked and completions and supplements carried out. However, these activities had to be stopped due to the planned withdrawal of the army in October. The census material of Berati, Fieri, Lushnja, and Skrapar were destroyed by the district headquarters in Lushnja during the withdrawal from Albania (Seiner 1922, p.5), and the material concerning these regions (89,142 persons) is therefore missing. The rest has been stored in 47 boxes in the Archive of the Austrian Academy of Science in Vienna (Nicholson, 1999, p. 1-34). In order to use this excellent source on Albania, a project was undertaken at the University of Graz, where the census schedules were scanned, and the material was put into a machine-readable format using SPSS.

Concluding Remarks

The establishment of a functioning administration in the occupied territories was a process that reflected the different views the Army High Command and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had regarding the status of Albania during World War I. Despite the previous statement that

no military administration would be necessary for the occupied Albanian territories, such an administration was in fact later established. The military administration, which also relied on influential Albanian locals, undertook a series of measures in infrastructure, health, education, economy, and other fields. Nevertheless, the living conditions of the population were difficult, and there were reports and indications of misbehaviour on the part of the Austrian-Hungarian military troops. One of the most influential policies undertaken contributed to the construction of elites through measures on education, the training of civil servants, as well as conducting a population census.

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