

A L B A N I A N - Sat, 25 May 1996 10:42:42 GMT

For your information:

Extracts from Royalty Digest, A Journal of Record; No. 12, Vol. IV, June 1995:

"AN EAGLE IN LONDON"

[By David Horbury]

"Although Zog ruled autocratically and could be ruthless when threatened, his reign also saw the creation of a recognisable Albanian nation-state. He developed the civil service and the armed forces, reorganised and professionalised the police force, banned the practise of polygamy and standardised the Albanian language. He built schools and hospitals and improved the country's barely existing transport network. Obviously such ambitious plans needed capital for which Zog had little alternative but to turn to Italy. Italian financiers established the National Bank of Albania and throughout the 1920's Italian economic influence in the country steadily increased, providing a useful channel for Mussolini's territorial ambitions towards Albania."

"[...], Italian forces began to invade the country. Still recovering from the difficult birth, Geraldine and the infant [Crown] Prince Leka were evacuated to safety in Greece. King Zog initially wished to remain in Albania to lead resistance from the mountains but he quickly recognised the impossibility of such a plan when the Yugoslavs informed him that if fighting broke out near its borders her troops would occupy Albanian territory. Added to this was an ultimatum from the Greek government that the King and his supporters would be allowed free passage through the Greek frontier only up to midnight on the 9th April. In consequence Zog made the decision to leave Albania and taking care to secure his personal fortune - [...] he joined his wife in Greece."

The Greek government were unhappy playing host to the exiled Albanian royal family and soon Zog and Geraldine were on the move. With King Victor Emmanuel of Italy now enjoying the title of King of the Albanians, Zog and his party were careful to skirt Axis territory and after travelling through Turkey, Romania, Poland, the Baltic States, Sweden [and Norway as well - DTH] and Belgium they finally settled in France.

Yet their hopes for security and sanctuary were quickly dashed as the Nazi invasion of France forced them to seek refuge in London."

"An important element in Sir Herbert's letter [Sir Herbert Williams, British MP during the WW2, leaning on information provided by the former Albanian diplomat, Catin Sarachi] and of Sarachi's criticism of Zog was the claim that before leaving Albania, the royal family had effectively ransacked the national treasury. Sir Herbert suggested that because of this Zog's bank accounts and other assets in London should be frozen. In her memoirs Queen Geraldine reveals that Zog did indeed leave Albania with boxes filled with gold Napoleons to the value of £350,000, but stated that this represented his personal fortune, accumulated through the sale and rents of family lands over several years. [7] When the British government investigated Zog's finances they revealed an account in the Chase Manhattan Bank with \$200,000: £350,000 with Lloyds Bank in London and £310,000 in the Bank of Italy in London. The size

and provenance of Zog's financial resources continued to remain a matter of speculation but he certainly had sufficient means to support a large household and to finance agents and Legations in the Middle East for the duration of the war."

References: [7] Robyns, Gwen: Geraldine of the Albanians: MBW: 1987

The author of the article has also been digging into the Public Record Office in London to find material about the British authorities and King Zog during his exile in London in WW2.

I believe that the extracts mentioned above answers some of the questions and comments regarding the escape from Albania and the royal family's personal fortune. I recommend you to read the whole article - which is some of the best literature (and must be regarded as balanced as well) I have read about the Zogu dynasty throughout the years - contact Royalty Digest, Church Street, Ticehurst, East Sussex, TN5 7AA, UNITED KINGDOM, for more information.

I appreciate the comments made by, among others, Mr. George A. Zeo. I do not have time to answer it right now, but will try to do it after the Whitsun holidays [the University of Oslo will be closed on Sunday and Monday, and without a key card, I'll have to stay at home]. But I must stress that democracy and monarchy can go well together. Your comments are just the same as the republicans made in Norway 1905 during the campaign before the referendum about monarchy. 91 years have gone since then, and most people would say that Norway is one of the most democratic countries in the world - with the royal family as the best guarantee for continuity and stability, and representing Norway domestically and abroad in the best way. There are other constitutional countries both in Europe and other parts of the world who are functioning as well (look to Cambodia, for instance). If monarchy is the best solution for Albania is another matter, and something the Albanians in the homeland should be allowed to discuss freely - comments made by a Norwegian might not be that relevant. But I will come back to your letter later on.

Finally, I am sure you are aware of the news that King Simeon of Bulgaria arrived in Sofia today after 50 years in exile, receiving a very positive welcome by thousands of Bulgarians. It could be you next time!

Dag T. Hoelseth

<http://listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind9605d&L=albanian&P=7705>