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VOJISLAV G. PAVLOVIĆ



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“THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS”: MILAN STOJADINOVIĆ, ALBANIA AND YUGOSLAV-ITALIAN RELATIONS, 1935-1939

Dragan Bakić

From the outset of her existence, Italy was the *bête noire* of the successor state of Yugoslavia created on the ruins of Austria-Hungary after the Great War. A historical claim on Dalmatia populated by Yugoslavs remained a watchword of Italian nationalists despite the territorial settlement reached between the two countries in Rapallo in 1920 and Rome's acquisition of the town of Fiume in 1924 as part of the Italo-Yugoslav treaty of friendship in 1924 (Pact of Rome). The Italians based their territorial ambitions on what the Entente Powers had granted them on the eastern coast of the Adriatic by the 1915 Treaty of London, but had not fully materialized at the end of the war. Moreover, for Italy, the very existence of Yugoslavia was an obstacle for its grandiose plans for political domination in the Balkans and the Danube region. The animosity towards Belgrade was made more pronounced on account of Yugoslavia's friendly relations with France and membership of the anti-Hungarian Little Entente, together with Czechoslovakia and Romania, which Rome perceived as an instrument of French security system in post-war Europe. For that reason, Yugoslavia became central to Mussolini's rivalry with France over predominance in South-Eastern Europe, which made her importance in international relations far exceed her economic and military capabilities.¹

Much of hostility in Yugoslav-Italian relations in the interwar period revolved around the precarious independence of Albania. This particular issue was grounded in pre-1914 Balkan entanglements. The Albanian coast had special geostrategic importance for Italy because its possession would mean full control of the Straits of Otranto and thus the entire Adriatic. This was equally true for Austria-Hungary and herein lay the reasons for local struggle for dominance over Albanian chieftains to the extent that Albania presented “the

¹ W. Shorrock, *From Ally to Enemy: The Enigma of Fascist Italy in French Diplomacy*, Kent, OH, 1988; J. Gooch, *Mussolini and his Generals: The Armed Forces and Fascist Foreign Policy, 1922–1940*, Cambridge, 2007.

major point of dispute in Austro-Italian relations.² The victorious Serbian army occupied the Albanian coast in the Balkan War against the Ottoman Empire in 1912 with an eye to securing Serbia's outlet to the sea. Italy seconded the determined opposition of Austria-Hungary to Serbian ambitions and the creation of an independent Albania as a means of driving the Serbians out.³ After the outbreak of the Great War, the still neutral Italy seized the opportunity to occupy the port of Valona and the island of Saseno in December 1914, exploiting Austria-Hungary's involvement in military operations. This in part prompted Serbia to occupy Elbasan and Tirana in June 1915, supporting pro-Serbian Essad Pasha Toptani to maintain his power.⁴ After Serbia's collapse in the fall of 1915 and retreat from Albania, it was not before the end of the Great War that Belgrade restored its military presence in Albania, but Italian army had occupied most of the country by then. During the Paris peace conference, the newly-formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (officially renamed Yugoslavia after 1929) advocated an independent Albania for the sole purpose of eliminating Italy's foothold in the Balkans, whereas the annexation of northern regions up to the Drin river remained a reserve policy in case Great Powers dropped Albanian independence.⁵ But even independent Albania remained an arena of Italo-Yugoslav rivalry for influence over local chieftains which only served to exacerbate the proverbial political turmoil of that young European country.

In 1924, Yugoslavia supported Ahmed Bey Zogu to re-establish his government in Tirana in the vain hope that he would become the fulcrum of Yugoslav influence in Albania. However, this proved to be a grave mistake as Ahmed Zogu turned to Rome for financial and political backing to maintain his power and revive Albanian irredentism in Yugoslavia – a considerable number of Albanians populated the Serbian areas of Kosovo, Metohija and western Macedonia. The Pact of Rome foundered on the Albanian rivalry between Rome and Belgrade. With the conclusion of the Tirana Pact between Ahmed Zogu and Mussolini's government in 1926, Albania became a virtual protectorate of Italy.⁶

² C. J. Lowe and F. Marzari, *Italian Foreign Policy, 1870-1940*, London, Boston, 2010 (1st ed. 1975), p. 99-100; also R. J. B. Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian foreign policy before the First World War*, New York, 1979, p. 87-88, 121.

³ D. Djordjević, *Izlazak Srbije na Jadransko more i Konferencija ambasadora u Londonu 1912*, Beograd, 1956.

⁴ M. Ekmečić, *Ratni ciljevi Srbije 1914*, Beograd, 1990 (1st ed. 1973), p. 372-405; D. T. Bataković, "Esad-paša Toptani i Srbija 1815. godine", in *Naučni skup Srbija 1915. godine*, Beograd, 1986, p. 299-327; D. Fundić, "The Albanian Question in Serbian-Italian Relations 1914-1918", in V. Pavlović (ed.), *Serbia and Italy in the Great War*, Belgrade, 2019, pp. 185-194.

⁵ D. Bakić, "The Italo-Yugoslav Conflict over Albania: A View from Belgrade, 1919-1939", *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25/4, 2014, p. 593-594.

⁶ S. Mišić, *Albanija – prijatelj i protivnik: jugoslovenska politika prema Albaniji 1924-1927*, Beograd, 2009.

Such situation presented grave dangers to Yugoslav policy-makers: it not only accentuated the Albanian irredentism (Ahmed Zogu conspicuously crowned himself King of Albanians in 1928), but also entrenched Italian presence in the Balkans and exposed Yugoslavia to strategic encirclement. The Tirana Pact marked the beginning of a decade of hostile relations between Belgrade and Rome – with Tirana acting as an outpost of Italy’s endeavour to weaken Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav military responded to the new strategic situation after the Tirana Pact, namely the possibility of an Italian offensive from Albania, by preparing a new plan of war against Italy in February 1927 which was replaced by another one in December 1929.⁷ The details of an operation “in case Italy entered Albania with her troops” were further elaborated in April 1930.⁸ The operation envisaged the occupation of certain parts of Albania and it predicted two alternative lines to be reached, one closer to and the other further away from the border. Thus there was a minimum and maximum requirement due to the uncertainty of events in case of Italian action. The assumption was made that the Italians would disembark on the Albanian coast in reaction to disorder in the country, and that a faction among both the Albanian army and the civilians would offer armed resistance to the invaders. The landing on the coast and the armed resistance would likely allow enough time for Yugoslav troops to cross the border and take up strong strategic positions as envisioned in the plan before they made contact with Italian forces. The Italian threat from Albania prompted Yugoslavia to press in Paris for the immediate conclusion of a friendship treaty with France to prop up her shaken position in the Balkans. Despite initial hesitation of the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, anxious to spare Italian susceptibilities, the pact was signed on 11 November 1927. Mussolini’s flamboyant reaction followed only eleven days later: he concluded a defensive alliance with Albania. The Yugoslav King Alexander I and Foreign Minister, Vojislav Marinković, also made efforts to come to a direct understanding with Italy.⁹ Their attempts, however, were doomed to failure as Mussolini hankered after potential disruption of Yugoslavia following the introduction of Alexander’s dictatorship in 1929 and the staunch Croat opposition to centralist administration and the ideology of integral Yugoslavism. Moreover, Mussolini

⁷ M. Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922-1935*, Beograd, 1994, p. 207-209; Dalibor Velojić, “Ratni planovi Vojske Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1928-1928”, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 1, 2017, p. 59-61.

⁸ Belgrade, Vojni arhiv [Military Archives, hereafter VA], registry 17, box 20, fascicle 1, doc. 1, The instructions for execution of the action envisaged by the order of the Minister of Army and Navy, strictly confidential no. 665 of 1 April 1930.

⁹ B. Krizman, “Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra i kneza Pavla”, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 1, 1975, p. 44-54; E. Milak, *Italija i Jugoslavija, 1931-1937*, Beograd, 1987, p. 57-58, 60-63; K. Pavlović, “La Yougoslavie et l’Italie entre les deux guerres, les conversations Marinkovitch-Grandi (1930-1931)”, *Revue d’Histoire diplomatique* 3, 1967, p. 1-14.

provided a safe haven for the terrorist and increasingly fascist Croat *Ustasha* organisation, which would be instrumental in the assassination of King Alexander at Marseilles in 1934.¹⁰

Yugoslavia had no clear and co-ordinated line of policy to deal with Ahmed Zogu, who was seen as a tool of Rome but at the same time not completely dismissed as a potential partner in a struggle to prevent Italy from setting its foot in Albania. There were some indications that Zogu had become alive to the danger of a complete political and economic submission to Italy and tried to backpedal on more onerous obligations demanded on the part of Rome.¹¹ The military even received reports, later to be proven false, to the effect that Italian supporters in the country were plotting to overthrow, and even assassinate, King Zogu.¹² In June 1935, Zogu contacted the Yugoslav Legation in the most confidential manner and sounded it out as to the possibility of receiving support from Belgrade. He appeared to have been willing to make certain concessions – there was some talk of a monopoly on tobacco and raising an agricultural loan. Nevertheless, the Military Attaché, Colonel Mitrović, was suspicious that the “cunning and shifty” King may have just been manoeuvring to get a better bargain from Rome and he assumed that Albania would preserve her independence with the assistance of Great Powers.¹³ But despite all his hedging, Ahmed Zogu was forced to defer to the overwhelming leverage Rome had acquired over his petite kingdom and conclude a set of conventions with Italy in March 1936. Colonel Mitrović believed that the situation was such as to warrant for “the utmost pessimism” and insisted that Yugoslavia spare no effort to halt Italy’s entrenching at her flank. Mitrović suggested the following measures: the depopulation of Albanians living in the border area, the fortification of all important lines of communication to Albania and the support for Albanian nationalists to carry out a revolution while Italy was engaged in the conquest of Abyssinia. The last provision was based on the conviction that only the overthrow of the Zogu regime might change the situation in Yugoslavia’s favour.¹⁴

¹⁰ J. Sadkovich, *Italian Support for Croatian Separatism, 1927-1937*, New York, London, 1987.

¹¹ VA, registry 17, box 27, fascicle 10, doc. 3, Military Attaché to Chief of the Great General Staff, 10 October 1933, confidential no. 477.

¹² VA, registry 17, box 27, fascicle 12, doc. 2, The Intelligence Department of the Great General Staff to Military Attaché (Tirana), 4 December 1934, strictly confidential no. 1311, subject: Preparations for the assassination of King Zogu and revolt in Albania.

¹³ VA, registry 17, box 27, fascicle 43, doc. 2, Mitrović to Chief of the Great General Staff, 18 June 1935, confidential no. 203, subject: A difficult financial state of Albania.

¹⁴ VA, box 27, fascicle 17, doc. 3, Mitrović to Chief of the Great General Staff, 18 March 1936, strictly confidential no. 61, subject: A new Italo-Albanian agreement and its consequences. Also fascicle 19, doc. 3, Mitrović to Chief of the Great General Staff, 21 March 1936, strictly confidential no. 68, subject: New Italo-Albanian agreements signed.

But there was an important change of government in Yugoslavia after Alexander's assassination which brought about new overtones in foreign policy. Prince Paul, Regent of Yugoslavia, and his Prime Minister (and Foreign Minister) after June 1935, Milan Stojadinović, endeavoured to evade conflicts with revisionist neighbours and strengthen the international position of the country. In respect of Albania, and by implication Italy, Stojadinović made a point of restraining the government agencies from subversive activities against the Zogu regime, unlike previous Yugoslav governments.¹⁵ The meagre results derived from the interference in Albanian matters in the past apparently decided policy-makers in Belgrade to leave things lay dormant as far as possible. For that reason, diplomatic representatives in the Tirana Legation were more docile than their colleagues from the office of a military attaché. The Legation laboured, in accordance with their instructions, “to maintain the friendliest relations with the representatives of the official Albania”, and thus made sure “not to encourage the dissatisfied by its demeanour in their intentions to fight against the regime.”¹⁶ More importantly, a major diplomatic development was underway that could have secured an improvement in relations with Italy – Mussolini put out feelers for rapprochement between the two hostile neighbours.

The ensuing negotiations resulted in the conclusion of the Italo-Yugoslav friendship treaty (Pact of Belgrade) on 25 March 1937 signed by Stojadinović and Italian Foreign Minister, Count Galeazzo Ciano, which introduced a truly new atmosphere, if not for very long.¹⁷ That was a direct consequence of the increasing predominance of Hitler's Germany over South-Eastern Europe. German threat to Austria's independence was imminent and alarmed both Rome and Belgrade, despite their good relations, and even Italy's Axis partnership, with Berlin on account of a possible German descent on the Adriatic and the Balkans. In Ciano's view, the Pact of Belgrade became a fundamental factor in Italian policy which allowed Rome to expect “the possibility of an Anschluss with serenity”.¹⁸ Furthermore, he also believed that his sweeping diplomatic move destroyed “the system of French alliances” and

¹⁵ For instances of the anti-Zogu activities on the part of different government departments, see D. Bakić, “The Italo-Yugoslav Conflict over Albania”, p. 599-600.

¹⁶ Belgrade, Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia, hereafter AJ], The King Palace Fond, 74-3-10, Relations with Albania, Charge d'Affaires (Tirana) to Stojadinović, 4 March 1936, confidential no. 52.

¹⁷ For an account of the Italo-Yugoslav negotiations leading to the Pact of Belgrade, see Ž. Avramovski, *Balkanske zemlje i velike sile, 1935–1937: od italijanske agresije na Etiopiju do jugoslovensko-italijanskog pakta*, Beograd, 1968; J. Hoptner, “Yugoslavia as Neutralist: 1937,” *Journal of Central European Affairs* 16/2, 1956, p. 156–76; Krizman, “Italija u politici kralja Aleksandra...”, p. 64-74; E. Milak, *Italija i Jugoslavija...*, p. 132-141; M. Bucarelli, *Mussolini e la Jugoslavija (1922-1939)*, Bari, 2006, ch. VI.

¹⁸ *Ciano's Diary, 1937-1943*, London, 2002, entry on 5 December 1937, p. 32-33; also 10 December 1937, p. 34; 17 February 1938, p. 59; 13 March 1938, p. 69-70.

imagined that it would be possible for Italy “to take the place in Yugoslavia of France herself”.¹⁹ Yugoslavia, on the other hand, reaped great benefits from coming to terms with Rome: Italy dropped its support for the *Ustasha* terrorists (they were interned under the watchful eye of a high-ranking Yugoslav police officer) and the revisionist ambitions of Hungary and Bulgaria, and promised an improvement in the status of the Yugoslav (Slovene) national minority. In the volatile international situation of the second half of the 1930s, Stojadinović scored a major success which not only made Yugoslavia’s borders more secure, but also strengthened his hand in dealing with the Croatian Peasant Party’s opposition at home, ensuring that it could not internationalise the Croat question.²⁰

Throughout the negotiations with Italy and afterwards, Stojadinović promised that he was strictly adhering to the traditional Yugoslav standpoint of maintaining Albania’s independence.²¹ He informed the Minister in London that as confidential part of the Pact of Belgrade, which was not going to be published, he and Ciano had reached an arrangement regarding Albania on the basis of mutual recognition of that country’s independence.²² The Prime Minister described the text of the secret protocol as being favourable and modeled on the Geneva protocols of 1922 which re-confirmed the independence of Austria. Indeed, the protocol in question gave certain satisfaction to the Yugoslavs. It recorded Italy’s obligations to put an end to fortification works in Albania, which Belgrade had been resenting for a long time, and “not to seek any special benefits in political, economic or financial respect which would directly or indirectly compromise the independence of the Albanian state.”²³ Such provision met the minimum requirement that Stojadinović and his Foreign

¹⁹ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 29 December 1937, p. 41 and *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, ed. by M. Muggeridge, trans. S. Hood, London, 1948, Conversation with the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Stojadinovitch, Belgrade, 26th March 1937 – XV, p. 98-105; see also M. Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed, 1939–1941: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy’s Last War*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 35-36; J. Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918–1940*, Westport, CT, 1997, p. 155-156; G. Bruce Strang, *On the Fiery March: Mussolini Prepares for War*, Westport, CT, 2003, p. 76-79.

²⁰ D. Bakić, “Milan Stojadinović, the Croat Question and the International Position of Yugoslavia, 1935-1939”, *Acta Histriae* 26/1, 2018, p. 207-228; S. Trifković, “Milan Stojadinović, Italija i hrvatsko pitanje”, in Miša Djurković (ed.), *Milan Stojadinović: politika u vreme globalnih lomova*, Beograd, 2012, p. 75-84.

²¹ AJ, London Legation, 1937, I-2 (Italy), Stojadinović to London Legation, 24 March 1937, confidential no. 479; also Stojadinović to London Legation, 25 March 1937, confidential no. 480.

²² AJ, London Legation, 1937, I-2 (Italy), Stojadinović to London Legation, 25 March 1937, confidential no. 481; Stojadinović to London Legation, 29 March 1937, confidential no. 537; see also Ž. Avramovski, “Problem Albanije u jugoslovensko-italijanskom sporazumu od 25. III 1937.”, *Historijski pregled* IX/1, 1963, p. 19-31.

²³ I. Andrić, *Diplomatski spisi*, ed. by M. Milošević, Beograd, 1992, doc. 118, Memorandum by Ivo Andrić, 30 January 1939 [hereafter Andrić memorandum], p. 224.

Ministry formulated during the course of negotiations. They declined the Italian proposal for a plain statement to the effect that both sides intended to respect the independence of Albania as deprived of any practical value given the actual situation in that country and insisted on their own wording which could “create a possibility to conduct negotiations with Italy later which might change the current situation”. The Yugoslavs thus looked at the *modus vivendi* reached with a view to the future: “The main thing is that it contains the principles the effective application of which would have to undermine the current position of Italy in Albania.”²⁴

This time, however, there were certain considerations which might have vouched for the endurance and sincerity of the Italo-Yugoslav agreement. Apart from their common apprehension with regard to the growing German power and ambition, Ciano was much influenced by his “personal sympathy for Stojadinović” and his conviction – irrespective of its correctness or incorrectness – that the latter was inclined towards Fascist concept of authoritarian power.²⁵ Stojadinović accepted the view constantly reiterated by Ciano during the negotiations according to which Albania had been a major problem in relations between the two countries when they had been hostile to each other; in an entirely different atmosphere created by their treaty, he declared to Ciano during their first meeting, “the Albanian problem returns to its true proportions: that of an unimportant local problem.”²⁶ Indeed, it was not as much as mentioned during Stojadinović’s return visit to Rome in late 1937, while on the occasion of his third meeting with Ciano in Venice in mid-1938 he repeated the statement made in Belgrade, and did not even shy away from saying that he recognised Italy’s “absolutely exceptional position with regard to that state.”²⁷ This was, however, a tactical manoeuvre rather than a statement of the real change of policy on the part of the Prime Minister. He reassured the Tirana Legation in regard of Yugoslav “calm and observing attitude”. Stojadinović put forward the opinion that given the problem of Albanian irredentism, “a policy of active friendship with Albania might only make the Albanians here raise their heads”. The hostility towards Tirana was not wanted either, so there was not much scope for new initiatives. In the final instance, Stojadinović mused, “the key of Albania

²⁴ AJ, Vojislav Jovanović-Marambo Papers, 95-68-21(1-7). The documents from this file contain material concerning the negotiations with Italy generated by the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry but they are undated and unsigned.

²⁵ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 5 December 1937, p. 32-33; 8 December 1937, p. 33; 10 December 1937, p. 34; *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, Conversation with the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Stoyadinovitch, Belgrade, 26th March, 1937 – XV, p. 98-105; B. Simić, “Milan Stojadinović and Count Ciano – A History of a Friendship”, *Tokovi istorije* 3, 2019, p. 11-36.

²⁶ *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, Conversation with the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Stoyadinovitch, Belgrade, 26th March, 1937 – XV, p. 98-105.

²⁷ *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, Conversation with the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Stoyadinovitch, Venice, 18th June, 1938 – XVI, p. 212-216.

is in Rome and with our friendship with Italy which the Anschluss will only make stronger we also partially hold that key in our hands".²⁸

Not surprisingly then, Yugoslavia kept a perfectly loyal attitude towards the Zogu regime after the conclusion of the Pact of Belgrade. Both the Minister and Military Attaché in Tirana rejected out of hand the proposals to support a plot which involved the murder of the King and advised the plotters to work together with Zogu.²⁹ Stojadinović believed that Ciano intended loyally to adhere to their agreement as well. Ciano's visit to Tirana at the end of April 1938, which he had announced to Belgrade, his demeanour there and particularly the treatment accorded to the local Yugoslav representative, was interpreted as being perfectly in step with the recent understanding between the two countries.³⁰ Moreover, Stojadinović was under impression that the purpose of the visit was to provide suitable reassurance to King Zogu as to the fact that Albania's interests were fully recognised by the Pact of Belgrade.

But Stojadinović's Albanian policy did not meet with approval in all quarters, especially in the military. The new Military Attaché at Tirana, Lieutenant-Colonel Vladimir Kalečak, was as suspicious about the true Italian intentions as his predecessor Mitrović. He warned that "the passivity of our policy in Albania is a tacit approval of Italian activity and the consequent strengthening of Italian position in this Balkan country."³¹ Given the popular anti-Italian feeling in the country and the overtures made by the government and King Zogu himself in the spring of 1937, Kalečak suggested a wider and well-planned action, without breaking the treaty with Italy, with a view to weakening Italian influence in the economic and political field. To this end, he proposed that King Zogu's offer for the conclusion of a political pact of friendship be accepted. Although it would not bring about any real change in the existing political relations, it would echo "favourably among the Albanian people, strengthen the resistance to Italian penetration and raise awareness of the need for the preservation of this country's independence."³² A pact should be supplemented by a series of other economic and cultural measures which would raise Yugoslavia's prestige and show her sympathy for Albania's struggle for survival. The Intelligence Department of the Great General Staff was in agreement with Kalečak's ideas but stressed that his plan of action had to be

²⁸ AJ, Milan Stojadinović Papers, 37-28-462, Stojadinović to Janković, 19 March 1938, no number.

²⁹ VA, registry 17, box 27, fascicle 18, doc. 4, [Military Attaché at Tirana] Kalečak to Chief of the Great General Staff, 5 June 1937, subject: Report on the situation in Albania.

³⁰ AJ, London Legation, 1937, I-2 (Italy), Stojadinović to Milanović [Charge d'Affaires], 22 May 1937, confidential no. 940.

³¹ VA, registry 17, box 27, fascicle 24, doc. 4, Kalečak to Chief of the Great General Staff, 27 July 1938, strictly confidential no. 94, subject: A study of Italy's activity and the need to strengthen foreign policy activity of Yugoslavia towards Albania.

³² *Ibid.*

approved by the Tirana Legation. In order to supply the Great General Staff with comprehensive information, Kalečak was requested to compile a report in cooperation with the Minister and clearly indicate on which points the latter's considered opinion differed from that of his Military Attaché.³³ As will be seen later, the events would make such an analysis redundant. But Stojadinović did not consider suggestions to work with Zogu in order to maintain the independence of Albania, relying on his rapprochement with Italy to protect Yugoslavia's interests. The Prime Minister was certainly correct in assessing the nature of Zogu's overtures to Belgrade: he saw through his attempts to play off Italy and Yugoslavia against each other.

Unfortunately for the Yugoslavs, Mussolini and Ciano set their hearts on the annexation of Albania in May 1938.³⁴ Ciano made it clear that he preferred the annexation of the entire Albanian territory by Italy alone, but he acknowledged that the spoils might have to be shared with Greece and Yugoslavia, and particularly stressed that the agreement with, or even the complicity of, the latter country might be indispensable for the realisation of his project. Mussolini eagerly approved Ciano's suggestions and started contemplating what was necessary in the way of local and international preparations.³⁵ In January 1939, Mussolini and Ciano decided that Ciano should visit Belgrade to discuss the Albanian question. They were in agreement to proceed to occupying Albania only if they could have the Yugoslavs march with them. The Duce, in particular, was concerned with the effect that the annexation of Albania might produce on Yugoslavia, and not so much the immediate reaction but rather a long-term cooling of relations with Italy from which Germany could be a sole beneficiary. Just a few days before Ciano's departure, the final decision was made “that it would not pay to gamble with our precious friendship with Belgrade to win Albania”; in order to attain an amicable consent of Belgrade, Yugoslavia would be offered: “increase at the Yugoslav borders, demilitarisation of the Albanian borders, military alliance, and the absolute support of the Serbs in their conquest of Salonica [Thessaloniki].”³⁶

In the final instance, it was up to Stojadinović to make the best out of an extremely difficult situation. Since Ciano had informed Hristić in Rome what it was that he wanted to discuss, the Prime Minister was not unprepared. “I

³³ VA, registry 17, box 27, fascicle 23, doc. 4, Intelligence Department to Kalečak, 31 January 1939, strictly confidential no. 125.

³⁴ G. Bruce Strang, *On the Fiery March...*, p. 147-148.

³⁵ *Ciano's Diary*, entry on 29 April 1938, p. 86; 10 May 1938, p. 89.

³⁶ *Ciano's Diary*, entry on 15 January 1939, p. 178. Ciano had already spoken to Boško Hristić, the Yugoslav Minister in Rome, encouraging Yugoslav action towards Salonika, “the natural outlet of the Yugoslavs to the [Aegean] sea.” See entry on 24 November 1938, p. 160. For the role of Thessaloniki in Yugoslavia's foreign and defence policy, see D. Bakić, “The Port of Salonica in Yugoslav Foreign Policy, 1919–1941”, *Balkanica* 43, 2012, p. 191-219.

consulted in advance the Prince Regent, our General Staff and my assistant in the Foreign Ministry, Ivo Andrić, whom I respected very much and took account of his opinion in all more important questions”, Stojadinović wrote in his memoirs.³⁷ According to the same account, both Prince Paul and Andrić considered it best for Yugoslavia that the territorial status in the Balkans remained unchanged. It was preferable not to give Ciano a reply. If, however, he was to be insistent, it should suffice to take notice of his proposals and reserve the right to return an answer at some later point, making an effort all along to keep the exchange of views friendly and by no means spoil relations with Italy.³⁸

During the first day of Ciano’s visit on 19 January 1939, Stojadinović took him for a hunt in the magnificent woods of the Belje estate. Each of the participants made two records, and it is only by comparative analysis that one can try to reconstruct what passed between them. In his diary, Ciano succinctly recorded the reaction produced upon his bringing up the Albanian question: “At first Stoyadinovich seemed perturbed. Then he broke the ice, and spoke of the partition of Albania as the best solution.”³⁹ The official report filed in Rome was much more detailed. In it, Ciano recounted how he justified the need for action in Albania by the internal unrest and Zogu’s obscure policy which put Italian economic interests in danger. Having made some contemptuous comments on Zogu, Stojadinović said that there were two possibilities: to replace the King by someone else, although he did not know of a suitable candidate, or divide the country between Italy and Yugoslavia. “He added, however, that at the moment he was not prepared to discuss the matter thoroughly since he was not acquainted with the details of the problem.” Ciano agreed and added “that it was sufficient to have made contact on the subject.”⁴⁰ The consultations were to be continued through the agency of Filippo Anfuso, Ciano’s chef de cabinet, and Stojadinović’s brother Dragomir – as had been done since their first meeting.

Stojadinović’s report to Prince Paul – and his later recollection in his memoirs – tallies with that of Ciano in all essentials. The only difference concerns the enthusiasm, or the lack thereof, with which the Italian plan was met by the Yugoslav Prime Minister. According to Stojadinović’s version, he received Ciano’s suggestion with a show of indifference as if he was perfectly content to leave matters lay dormant. “As far as the partition is concerned, I

³⁷ M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat, ni pakt*, Rijeka, 1970, p. 514. Indeed, Stojadinović asked Prince Paul for an audience on 17 January to discuss Ciano’s visit. See AJ, Prince Paul Papers, Stojadinović to Prince Paul, private, 16 January 1939, reel 4, scans 531-532. Andrić won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1961 for his novel *The Bridge on the Drina*.

³⁸ M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, p. 514-515.

³⁹ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 19 January 1939, p. 179; for a recent account of the meeting, see B. Simić, “Poseta grofa Čana Jugoslaviji u januaru 1939. i pad Milana Stojadinovića”, *Arhiv* 1-2, 2018, p. 67-76.

⁴⁰ *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers*, The Report on my Journey to Yugoslavia and of the Conversation with the Prime Minister, Stoyadinovitch, 18-23 January, 1939 – XVII, p. 267-272.

remember it was once a subject of discussion some 15 years ago, but we have always considered Albania to be a poor, uncivilised country which would be a heavy burden to anyone and cause the expenditure, and no benefits”, Stojadinović reminded his guest.⁴¹ He also drew attention of Prince Paul to a report from Radoje Janković, the Minister in Tirana, advancing ideas along the same lines as those of Ciano, and wondered: “Who suggested it to whom?”⁴² Stojadinović also reported on Ciano’s prodding of Yugoslavia to secure an outlet to the Aegean through the acquisition of Salonica. In his memoirs, Stojadinović claimed to have tried to deter Ciano from Albania by pointing out that it was not a small matter “to delete from the geographic map a country which is a member of the League of Nations and has been a sovereign state for years.”⁴³ But he apparently did not offer too much of a resistance. Perhaps he realised that Italy was determined to act and that a more persistent opposition on the part of Yugoslavia could serve no other purpose but strain relations between the two countries – it had been decided during the consultations with Prince Paul and Andrić to avoid that at all costs. Thus, he did not fail to remark that “our entrance into Albania would mean not to let you be there on your own” and underscored the importance for Yugoslavia of the stretch of territory including Shkodra and San Giovanni di Medua.⁴⁴ With this in view, and notwithstanding that Stojadinović was careful to cultivate Ciano’s perception of their close collaboration, it is highly likely that the latter exaggerated the enthusiasm of the former for the idea of partition. Vain and ambitious, Ciano invested much of his political credibility in the Pact of Belgrade and his personal working relationship with Stojadinović. Therefore, he had no compunction to make his account more flattering to his own achievement and more to the Duce’s liking. In the same official report, for example, Ciano wrote that the Prime Minister had “stated that he was completely calm as far as the internal situation [in Yugoslavia] and his personal position were concerned.” This was an outright lie. Quite the contrary, he confided in his diary, not to be seen by Mussolini, that Stojadinović was “careful about his relations with the monarchy, which do not seem good.”⁴⁵ The same consideration appears to have applied to Ciano’s record of his conversation

⁴¹ AJ, Prince Paul Papers, Stojadinović to Prince Paul, private, 20 January 1939 (from Belje), reel 4, scans 534-541.

⁴² *Ibid.* The report (of 1 January 1939) that Stojadinović referred to has not survived in the archives. However, Janković did change his view with respect to the partition of Albania with Italy in the course of time. On his appointment in Tirana, he was adamant that not even the possession of the island of Saseno by Italy should be consented to, whereas in early January 1939 he was reported to have been in favour of restricting the Italian sphere of interest to the coastal zone. See Ž. Avramovski, “Pitanje podele Albanije u razgovorima Stojadinović-Čano januara 1939. i stav nekih diplomatskih i vojnih ličnosti”, *Albanološka istraživanja* 2, 1965, p. 131-157.

⁴³ M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, p. 517.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

⁴⁵ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 21 January 1939, p. 179.

with Prince Paul. Having been asked for his views on Albania, the Regent, who was probably the last person in Yugoslavia to accept her division, simply retorted: "We have already so many Albanians inside our frontiers and they give us so much trouble that I have no wish to increase their number." Yet, Ciano interpreted Prince Paul's words as meaning that he was "less interested than Stoyadinovitch in the piece of territory to be allotted to Yugoslavia" rather than opposed to the whole idea.

Following Ciano's departure, the Foreign Ministry embarked on a debate what policy Yugoslavia should adopt as regards the proposed division of Albania. Ivo Andrić prepared a masterly clear and penetrating analysis of the Albanian question since the time of the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Starting from the premise that the independence of a country was "a relative notion", he believed that despite Italian sway over that country Rome had not yet set foot in the Balkans or had the full freedom of action in Albanian territory. He asserted that the "Balkans to the Balkan peoples" policy was as always the best guarantee for peace in the peninsula and the cooperation and free development of the Balkan countries. Italy had not been trusted to restrain itself on the small coastal stretch of Albania twenty years ago and could still less be trusted to do so under Mussolini's direction. Taking a piece of Balkan territory by a non-Balkan Great Power without any ethnic justification would pose "a dangerous precedent for all Balkan peoples and for us".⁴⁶ Moreover, a revival of the Italian claim on Albania, once envisaged in the Treaty of London, would open the door for Italian demands in Dalmatia on the basis of that treaty. On the other hand, there were two contingencies that had to be avoided at all costs: open or covert clash with Italy and the Italian occupation of the whole of Albania. With this in mind, "the division of Albania, in our view, could be considered only as a necessary and inevitable evil which cannot be resisted, and as a great detriment from which one should extract as much benefit as possible i.e. choose the lesser of two evils."⁴⁷ If it came to pass, Andrić concluded, Yugoslavia should strive for the frontier along the rivers Mati and Black Drin, as once envisaged by the late Serbian/Yugoslav premier Nikola Pašić, which would provide for the strategic security of Montenegro and Kosovo. He also reiterated the old arguments relating to economic advantages and the possibility of building new transport links with the Adriatic in case of the incorporation of Shkodra and northern Albania. Another advantage derived from the division of the country would be the disappearance of the point of attraction for Albanian irredentism and the easier assimilation of the minority living in Kosovo. Yugoslavia would absorb another 200 to 300 thousand Albanians, but those were mostly Roman Catholics who never got along with their Muslim compatriots. It should be noted that,

⁴⁶ Andrić memorandum, p. 225.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

given his close cooperation with the Foreign Minister, Andrić’s analysis and conclusions can be regarded as reflecting those of Stojadinović himself.

Whereas Andrić espoused the traditional Yugoslav policy which preferred an independent Albania and accepted her division only out of necessity, there were other voices which suggested an alternative approach. Ivan Vukotić, a Montenegrin who had been a Consul-General in Shkodra and well-versed in the Albanian situation, insisted to lay out his views in a private capacity. He professed that the absorption of northern and parts of central Albania was a vital Yugoslav interest. To prove his point, Vukotić adduced historical arguments about the constant use of Albanians as an anti-Serbian tool of Great Powers and stressed the standard economic and transport benefits of holding Shkodra. Nevertheless, Vukotić was aware that above all he had to address the crucial “question why our official circles have shied away from the division of Albania with Italy”.⁴⁸ He argued that the assumptions behind the official policy proved erroneous: rather than having Italian influence and presence ousted from Albania the administration of that country had fallen completely under Italian control and Albania had become an irredentist centre for Albanians in Yugoslavia. “In such state of affairs it is apparent and clear that it is in our interest to have Italy get hold of a part rather than the whole of Albania. If there were no other reasons for the division of Albania, this one would be sufficient.”⁴⁹ Vukotić’s views were typical of the strand of political thinking that persisted among Yugoslav diplomatic personnel throughout interwar years and challenged the viability of the official policy of maintaining Albanian independence.⁵⁰ Despite their differences, however, both Andrić’s and Vukotić’s analysis came to the conclusion that Yugoslavia would be forced to partake in the liquidation of Albania if the Italians proceeded to occupation. Whether that would be done enthusiastically, as Vukotić would have it, or with a bitter taste, as Andrić contended, was irrelevant in the circumstances.

The military also studied the situation most carefully. The Chief of the Great General Staff, General Dušan Simović, advanced his personal opinion that ran contrary to the long-standing doctrine held in the Army headquarters. In Simović’s view, “a military action which we would undertake in Albania would mostly benefit Italy for we would help her to overcome Albania’s resistance more rapidly”.⁵¹ As compensation for Rome’s acquisition, Yugoslavia would

⁴⁸ AJ, Stojadinović Papers, 37-28-208, Memorandum by Ivan Vukotić, 3 February 1939.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ For more detail, see A. Mitrović, “Jugoslavija, albansko pitanje i Italija, 1919-1939,” in A. Mitrović (ed.), *Srbi i Albanci u XX veku*, Beograd, 1991, p. 231-251, followed by English translation “Yugoslavia, the Albanian question and Italy, 1919-1939,” p. 253-273; D. Bakić, “The Italo-Yugoslav Conflict over Albania”, p. 601.

⁵¹ VA, registry 17, box 20, fascicle 5, doc. 1, Simović to Minister of Army and Navy, 20 February 1939, strictly confidential no. 150.

obtain the poorest and desolate mountainous region with the exception of Shkodra, populated with the most restless Albanian tribes, the governing of which would cost lots of money and cause political problems given the much enlarged Albanian population within Yugoslavia's borders. Simović argued that it would be more pragmatic to remain neutral and leave the Italians to do all the fighting and then endure the difficulties of quelling constant Albanian insurrections. He did not admit that Italian stronghold in Albania would significantly worsen the military position in relation to Italy, as Yugoslavia had always had to count on the possibility of an Italian attack from that quarter directed against her southern regions. This argument was new and somewhat specious. As if Simović felt so himself, he also provided other non-military reasons. From the foreign policy point of view, he professed, Yugoslavia could not act in the same way as Italy without detriment to her international standing. Territorial acquisitions in Albania would likely intensify the revisionist demands on the part of Hungary and Bulgaria at the expense of Yugoslavia. Simović even referred to the requirements of internal policy: at the moment when the Croat question was on the way towards solution, a military action could complicate it and even endanger "the survival of the state". He recommended a discreet support for Albania "so that she lasts as long as possible in the fight against the Italians both during the Italian occupation and afterwards."⁵²

However, the Minister for Army and Navy, General Milutin Nedić, was not impressed by Simović's case. Although agreeing with the contention that it would be highly undesirable to act against Albania as an accomplice of Rome, he pointed out that Yugoslavia had no way of preventing Italy from occupying that country. But to allow Italy to become a sole master of Albania would be a major aggravation of Yugoslav security. On the basis of classic strategic appreciation, Nedić argued that Yugoslavia had to reduce as much as possible the harmful consequences and perils from the south. To do so, the necessary requirements were "to decrease the territory which had to come under the governance of Italy" and "make that territory as far from us as possible in the southward direction and so reduce an effective and direct impact on the peace and security of our southern parts."⁵³ This analysis also put great emphasis on the need not to act as an invader on a par with Italy and allowed for the possibility of being neutral "even at the time of Italian landing in Albania". If, however, it appeared that the whole burden of preserving *status quo* fell on Yugoslavia's shoulders, then she would have to "prefer an arrangement with Italy to risking our existence". Such "undesired arrangement would just serve us for the purpose of gaining time, waiting for more favourable circumstances

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ VA, registry 17, box 20, fascicle 6, doc. 1, Nedić to Simović, 25 February 1939, strictly confidential no. 107.

when Italy could be removed from the Balkans.”⁵⁴ The Army Minister instructed Simović to prepare appropriate measures on the basis of his views. Consequently, the Great General Staff examined the possibility of an armed intervention in Albania. It could take two forms: overtaking the eastern part of the country so as to have a new border as far westwards as possible in order to better protect the south of Serbia or preventing the Italians from subduing Albania with a view to maintaining her independence. Both variants, it was asserted, would lead to an armed clash with Italy, and “through her, probably with Germany too”. The danger of such contingency was obvious. Therefore, the Army commanders concluded that the division of Albania could be undertaken “only on the basis of an agreement” with Italy after having delimited the spheres of interests, “although that should not be desired as well”.⁵⁵ Essentially, the Great General Staff was in agreement with Ivo Andrić of the Foreign Ministry.

It was Stojadinović’s downfall, however, rather than all the analyses of the political and military leadership, that had a decisive impact on the shaping of events. On 4 February 1939, the Regent engineered a crisis of Cabinet by having a few ministers resigned and then gave a mandate for premiership to Dragiša Cvetković. Prince Paul came to believe that Stojadinović was making some underhand deals behind his back, and to the detriment of Yugoslavia. According to later testimonies from persons close to the Regent and thus presenting his own viewpoint, he suspected Stojadinović of contriving a fantastic scheme. It involved the cession of the western non-Serb parts of Yugoslavia to Italy and the formation of Greater Serbia in which Stojadinović would be a fascist dictator and which would include the northern parts of Albania and Salonica.⁵⁶ Stojadinović’s handling of the Italian proposal to partition Albania has also been misinterpreted by a number of historians. Those based in Yugoslavia during the communist era used to present him as being pro-Axis and inclined to fascism in conformity with the prescribed communist view of pre-1941 kingdom. For example, Avramovski has gone so far as to claim that, in finding in Stojadinović,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ VA, registry 17, box 20, fascicle 5, doc. 1, Simović to Minister of Army and Navy, 7 March 1939, strictly confidential no. 150, subject: Military-political and political situation of Albania. Original emphasis. This opinion coincided with Stojadinović’s description of the Great General Staff’s attitude during his consultations with the Army prior to Ciano’s visit. If Italy entered Albania, the Army was of the opinion that “the extreme northern part of Albania, that is to say Skadar [Shkodra] along with the port of San Giovanni [di Medua]” should be absorbed by Yugoslavia. See M. Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt*, p. 514.

⁵⁶ D. Cvetković, *Dokumenti o Jugoslaviji*, vol. 10, “Sovjeti, Britanija i Jugoslavija 1940-41.”, Paris, 1958, Report of Colonel Tanasije Dinić, the president of the Committee for the investigation of responsibility in connection with the coup d’état of 27 March 1941, p. 10-11; VA, registry 17, box 59, fascicle 4, doc. 42., Interrogation of Aleksandar Cincar-Marković, 20 September 1945; V. Stakić, *Moji razgovori sa Musolinijem*, Minhen, 1967, p. 52-55; I. Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje*, Zagreb, 1969, p. 255-256; V. Maček, *In the Struggle for Freedom*, New York, 1957, p. 187.

and even Prince Paul, the “helpers for their invading aspirations towards Albania, the fascist [Italian] government achieved its goal. The fate of Albania was thus sealed.”⁵⁷ Other accounts by the exiled participants and non-Yugoslav historians were influenced by their sympathy for Prince Paul and also took a dim view of Stojadinović’s role in the negotiations with Ciano about the division of Albania.⁵⁸ In fact, there is not a shred of solid evidence either of Yugoslav or Italian provenance that Stojadinović acted in a manner disloyal to the Regent in his dealings with Ciano. Quite the contrary, the record appears to confirm that he took a position in accordance with what had been agreed prior to Ciano’s visit and re-affirmed as the best course of action in the political and military analyses before and after Stojadinović’s demission. And his position was within the bounds of traditional Yugoslav policy which had opted for an independent Albania since the Paris peace conference and seen the partition of that country only as a necessary alternative in case the independence proved untenable. Moreover, Stojadinović managed to postpone giving a final answer and, in doing so, at least bought some time for Belgrade. These incontrovertible facts, explicitly confirmed in Ciano’s record, do away with the conspiracy theory expounded by Stojadinović’s detractors and the biased accounts of some historians.

In reality, Stojadinović’s downfall immediately proved to be harmful to Yugoslav interests. Because of the confidence Mussolini and Ciano placed in him, he was the only person on the Yugoslav side capable of stalling the Italians or making a hard bargain with them. For that reason, the Italian statesmen made their further action dependent on the prospect of Stojadinović’s remaining in office: “With Stoyadinovich, partition of Albania between us and Yugoslavia; *without* Stoyadinovich, occupation of Albania by us without Yugoslavia, and, if necessary, even against Yugoslavia.”⁵⁹ Once it became clear that Stojadinović was removed from power, Ciano disregarded any concerns for Yugoslavia’s reaction to the impending occupation of Albania. He now argued that the

⁵⁷ Ž. Avramovski, “Italijanska okupacija Albanije i držanje jugoslovenske vlade”, *Istorijski glasnik* 1, 1963, p. 3-38. The same author later toned down the accusation against Stojadinović but maintained that he had been quite willing to agree to the division of Albania, in his “Pitanje podele Albanije u razgovorima Stojadinović-Čano...”, p. 131-157; also Lj. Boban, *Sporazum Cvetković-Maček*, Beograd, 1965, p. 34-35.

⁵⁸ For pro-Prince Paul views, see D. Tsvetkovitch, “Prince Paul, Hitler and Salonica”, *International Affairs* XXVII/4, 1951, p. 464; J. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941*, New York, 1962, p. 126-127, claims that Stojadinović indicated “neither the extent nor depth of his talks with Ciano” to Prince Paul and that his account of these talks does not match with that of the Italian. Both claims are groundless. Also N. Balfour and S. Mackey, *Paul of Yugoslavia: Britain’s Maligned Friend*, Winnipeg, 1996, p. 162-163. On the other hand, D. Biber “O padu Stojadinovićeve vlade”, *Istorija 20. veka, Zbornik radova* VII, 1966, p. 5-71, 17-23, is more careful in his assessment of the Ciano-Stojadinović talks but his discussion remains inconclusive.

⁵⁹ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 5 February 1939, p. 184-185. Original emphasis.

Albanian operation had to be stepped up because: “(1) the Yugoslavs now know that we are thinking of the matter, and the rumor may spread; (2) with the removal of Stoyadinovich the Yugoslav card has lost 90 percent of its value to us; (3) since the enterprise will no longer be undertaken in conjunction with Yugoslavia... we must not give her time to strengthen her contacts with France and with England on political, diplomatic, and military grounds.”⁶⁰ But Mussolini was concerned that the occupation of Albania might ruin the Pact of Belgrade and bring about the return of a visceral anti-Italian feeling in Yugoslavia. In the new situation following the Munich agreement and the final destruction of the rump Czechoslovakia in mid-March 1939, the Italians became apprehensive that Germany might oust Italian influence from Yugoslavia and actively interfere with the internal dissension between the Serbs and Croats. It was necessary for the Reich Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, to reassure Ciano as to the German intention to treat all the questions pertaining to the Mediterranean as an exclusive preserve of Rome.⁶¹

Mussolini then proceeded with the realisation of Ciano’s plan. On Easter, 7 April 1939, Italian forces disembarked on the Albanian coast and occupied the whole country without encountering a serious armed resistance. In early April, the Yugoslav Great General Staff was preparing plans, on the order of General Nedić, for the occupation of northern Albania but these were not, nor could be, completed in a few days prior to the Italian aggression. Moreover, the operational plans lacked basic assumptions about the political constellation vis-à-vis Italy in which such operation would take place and their exact objectives; it was instructive that the General Staff proposed as much as five different, and successively smaller, zones of occupation “in case a military-political arrangement comes to pass between us and Italy”.⁶² But there was neither an arrangement with Italy nor determination to act to protect the vital security interests. The consequences of the Italian military presence in Albania soon justified what the political and military leadership in Belgrade had long feared. Just two weeks after the occupation, Ciano had a conversation with a former Albanian diplomat which clearly indicated his intention to exploit Albanian irredentism in Kosovo.⁶³ It was not long before the Italians established contacts with the prominent Kosovo Albanians and started spreading money and

⁶⁰ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 7 February 1939, p. 186-187; also 6 February 1939, p. 186.

⁶¹ G. Bruce Strang, *On the Fiery March...*, p. 234-235.

⁶² D. Gvozdenović, *Aprilski rat 1941*, 2 vols., Beograd, 1969, vol. I, doc. 49, Directive of the Minister of Army and Navy to the Commander of the Vardar Army for the occupation of Northern Albania in April 1939; doc. 50, Proposal of the Great General Staff to the Minister of Army and Navy about the partition of Albanian territory in case a military-political arrangement comes to pass between Yugoslavia and Italy, p. 196-207.

⁶³ *Ciano’s Diary*, entry on 21 April 1939, p. 221.

propaganda to prepare the ground for an action against Yugoslavia.⁶⁴ Despite all appearances and lip service, Italian entrenchment in Albania marked a return to pre-Pact of Belgrade hostility between the Adriatic neighbours.

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⁶⁴ Ž. Avramovski, "Prilog pitanju italijansko-albanske iredentisticke propagande na Kosovu i Metohiji u vreme minhenske krize i okupacije Albanije", *Istorijski glasnik* 2-3, 1964, p. 123-140; L. Micheletta, "Italy, Greater Albania, and Kosovo 1939-1943", *Nuova rivista storica* 97/2, 2013, p. 524-531.