

## British and Yugoslav Response to Italian Invasion of Albania



### History

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### Abstract

By the end of 1930' the western powers like France and Great Britain warned small European countries that they cannot provide them a protection from German and Italian aggression. Such a statement reinforced expansionist aims of Germany and Italy, particularly the last mentioned was concerned if Germany's actions in Austria and Czechoslovakia may extend in Adriatic. In order to preserve its position in Balkans Italy approached to Yugoslavia with the aim to invade Albania. During all interwar period Yugoslavia and Italy struggled for political and economic influence in Albania, whereas Great Britain mostly acted as a mediatory power in its efforts to secure the peace. The conversion of Italy in a world military power was followed by change of attitudes of Yugoslavia and Great Britain towards Albania. Therefore this work pretends to analyse international political developments in Europe, especially diplomatic actions of Italy regarding the invasion into Albania and attitudes of Yugoslavia and Great Britain towards such aims, and later towards the Italian aggression against Albania.

### Introduction

By the end of 1930' the policy of passive opposition to German and Italian aspirations led to a situation when powers like Great Britain and France were unable to stop their aggression. The case of Abyssinia and German invasion of Rhine made it clear to small countries about their hopeless expectations to be protected by Great Britain and France. These doubts became clearer when the French Minister of Foreign Affairs declared:

*“The French ally with the Little Entente has no value anymore. In the future France does not expect to provide any support for Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania or Yugoslavia, in case of a German invasion”*<sup>1</sup>, or when in the eve of German invasion to Austria the British Prime Minister, Chamberlain, stated: *“The League of Nations cannot provide support to small countries in a case of an external aggression”*.<sup>2</sup>

The statement of Chamberlain was interpreted by Rome as a green light towards the objective to invade Albania. Regardless the Italian-British Agreement of 1938 about *“...respecting the national status-quo of Mediterranean states”*<sup>3</sup>, which was intended to separate the Italy from German influence, by the end of April 1938 Ciano and Mussolini started to prepare the ground to invade Albania. Following these plans emerged a need to secure Yugoslavia's consent, which was seen as an important factor against the German pressure in Adriatic and Danube.

<sup>1</sup>L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London, Hurst and Company, 2000, p. 741.

<sup>2</sup>EnverGaba, “Marrëdhënietshtëqiptaro-italianenëpraghtëpushtimitfashistëItalisë”, *StudimeHistorike*, Nr. 3, Tiranë, 1976, p. 139.

<sup>3</sup>David B. Funderburk, “Anglo-Albanian Relations 1920-1939”, *Revue des Etudes sud-estEuropennes*, Tome XIII, 1975, p. 121.

In his plan to occupy Albania Mussolini was not worried about reactions from Britain or France, neither for military response of Yugoslavian army, but he was only concerned if Yugoslavia may move towards approach with Germany as a result of discontent to Italian action. Therefore Mussolini authorized Ciano to find a proper compensation for Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup>

To check the impulse of Yugoslavia Ciano in June 1938 held a meeting with Stojadinović. Stojadinović declared that Albania didn't pose any problem to Italian-Yugoslav relations and that Yugoslavia recognizes the special position of Italy in Albania. But anyway Stojadinović did not give up from Yugoslavia's claims. Such claims were expressed by Yugoslavia's ambassador in Tirana who told to Albanian Foreign Minister that in case of Italian occupation of Albania, just for security reasons Yugoslavia has to occupy some lands in Northern Albania.<sup>5</sup>

The international developments in Europe, like the victory of Fascism in Spain and reinforcement of German positions in Central Europe after her actions in Austria and Czechoslovakia, alarmed Mussolini. The British Ambassador in Rome, Lord Perth, observed that the Italian influence in Danube area and Balkans was under a permanent German threat. Certainly, Italians were afraid and jealous on her northern neighbour, who was only 50 km far from Trieste and who may cause a provocation at any time.<sup>6</sup>

The Adriatic and a possible agreement between Hitler and Macek, which may result in an independent Croatia and affection of Italian interests in the region, was another concern of Mussolini. But Hitler provided guarantees to Mussolini that the Mediterranean was not a sphere of German influence and that he was not interested in Croatian issue.<sup>7</sup>

But, regardless to Hitler's assurances, the political developments in Europe represented a fear of a war, therefore Italy started looking towards Albania. In Italian plans Albania was not only seen as a card to improve the Italian reputation, but was seen also as a strategic-geographic region, a key point you can close Adriatic and Mediterranean Sea in case of a war. Although Italy was thinking that in a war circumstances landing of Italian army in Albania was provided by the Second Treaty of Tirana, this opinion was not supported by King Zog. According to a report that British ambassador in Albania forwarded to Foreign Office, during a conversation between the King Zog and Yugoslav ambassador in Tirana held in September 1938, the last one asked the attitudes of Albania in case of a war, and King Zog replied that Albania would ask for Italy's support in case of an aggression.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Jacob B. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi*, Rijeka, 1972, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup>*Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, Vëllimi III, 1912-1939, Tiranë, Toena, 2007, p. 255

<sup>6</sup>Živko Avramovski, *Britanci o Kraljevini Jugoslavije 1939-1941*, Beograd, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1996, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup>Velimir Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941*, Beograd, Narodna Knjiga, 1982, p. 241.

<sup>8</sup>Arkivi Instituta Historise Tiranë (AIH), A-109 FO 371/23714, Sir Andrew Ryan to Foreign Office, 18 May 1938, p. 71-72.

This statement gives an impression that Italy may land in Albania only by a preliminary consent of King Zog. Zog was not planning to follow the Italian line and to involve Albania in Italy's actions.

The stance of King Zog was nosed by Italians who rushed to secure by force provisions provided by the Second Treaty of Tirana.\* Italy started to prepare the ground to occupy Albania.

Under the scope of preparations to occupy Albania, the Yugoslav-Italian conversations that started in June 1938, had to continue. Now when the Italian aspirations became serious, the Yugoslavia's political and military authorities held a joint meeting to discuss the stance of Yugoslavia in forthcoming conversations between Ciano and Stojadinović. The Yugoslavian political-military circles reached following conclusion: "*Italy should be convinced to give up from annexation of Albania, but in case of failure Yugoslavia should claim North Albania including River Drin and city of Shkoder*".<sup>9</sup>

Following those principles in the meeting between Ciano and Stojadinović, held in Belgrade in January 1939, the issue of portioning Albania came up. It has to be emphasized that while Stojadinović was talking about partition of Albania, Ciano was replying on some border corrections and always avoided to cite the regions which had to be given to Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup>

This gives you understand that Italy was not willing to cede the North Albania to Yugoslavia, but she kept it secret in order to prevent change of Yugoslavia's attitudes to Ciano's plans.

The High Majesty Government (Great Britain) was fully informed about conversations between Ciano and Stojadinović. Prince Paul confidentially informed the High Majesty Government regarding these conversations. The Great Britain paid a special interest to those conversations, particularly to Italian plans like: reliable stance to Rome-Berlin Axis, approach between Italy, Germany and Japan, the offer made to Yugoslavia to access to Aegean Sea through the Thessaloniki, whereas about the Albania, Prince transmitted Italy's aspirations to put under control the oil sources in Southern Albania.<sup>11</sup>

Certainly, the unlimited control on those sources meant a facilitation of Italian dependencies for oil supply in world markets.

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\*The Pact of Friendship and Security between Albania and Italy signed in November 1926, Article 1: Albania and Italy recognize that any disturbance threatening the political, legal and territorial status-quo of Albania is contrary to their common political interests; Article 2: In order to safeguard the above-mentioned interests, the High Contracting Parties undertake to afford each other mutual support and cordial co-operation; they also undertake not to conclude with other Powers any political or military agreements prejudicial to the interests of the other Party, including those defined in the present Pact – see Swire, f. 375

<sup>9</sup>Ž. Avramovski, "Jugoslovensko-Albanski odnosi 1919-1939", *Casopis Ideje*, Br. 5-6, Beograd, 1987, p. 78.

<sup>10</sup>Bogdan Krizman, *Vanjskapolitikajugoslavenskedrzave*, Zagreb, 1975, p. 101-102.

<sup>11</sup>Ž. Avramovski, *Britanci o KraljeviniJugoslavije 1939-1941 ...*, p. 55.

Since he promised to Ciano to review the proposal, Stojadinović paid attention to get opinions from high Yugoslav diplomats, and particularly from the General Headquarters of the Army.

Two political opinions prevailed in Yugoslavian diplomacy, which were expressed by special memorandums. These memorandums were drafted for internal needs of Yugoslavian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his memorandum dated 10 January 1939, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ivo Andrić, perceived the Italian penetration in Balkans as a dangerous precession, which may jeopardize Yugoslavia. Anyway he observed the partition of Albania only as the last remaining option. In his memorandum he also mentioned the old projects of Yugoslavia for North Albania. The occupation of North Albania represented a beneficial economic aspect, especially Shkoder and her lake, the drainage of which may result in huge fertile land for Montenegro; in political side the occupation of North Albania would destroy the supporting ground of irredentism in Kosovo, whereas the displacement of Albanians to Turkey would be enforced under new circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

The second memorandum dated 10 February 1939, drafted by diplomat Vukotić, insisted in the immediate partition of Albania as a part of construction of age-long Serbian claims. Supporting his thesis he provided a historic observation on attempts to divide Albania between Yugoslavia and Italy; he also expressed his opinion about the failure of Yugoslavia's policy towards Albania.<sup>13</sup>

But, Stojadinović behaved differently with the Army. In his letter addressed to the Minister of the Army, 26 January 1939, he didn't mention that the project to divide Albania was a product of conversation with Ciano. Stojadinović wrote that the Italian government was dissatisfied with the King Zog, that Italy lost her confidence on the king and that there are some rumours about rebellions against King Zog to take place during the spring. At the end Stojadinović asked if Army had any project in such circumstances.<sup>14</sup>

Based on the request of Stojadinović, the Minister of Army asked the Commander of Yugoslavian Army General Headquarters to draft a military project in case of rebellion in Albania or in case of Italian military occupation of Albania. In his preliminary assessment General Simović emphasized that Yugoslavia's military intervention in Albania would go in favour of Italy, because the resistance of Albanian army would be broken easily. Italy would occupy harbours, mouth of Adriatic and Albanian land rich in oil, and what is left for Yugoslavia – poor mountain areas inhabited by a warlike population that would continually engage Yugoslavian Army in stand-by position. General Simović concluded that Yugoslav occupation of Albanian lands would induce similar actions from Hungary and Bulgaria, against Yugoslavia.

<sup>12</sup>B. Krizman, "ElaboratdraIveAndrića o Albanijiiz 1939 godine", *CasopiszaSuvremenuPovijest*, 9-1977, Br. 2, Zagreb, 1977, p. 79-89.

<sup>13</sup>XhaferDurmishi, *Vepra e Jusuf Gervalles*, Janar 2013, p. 78-79.

<sup>14</sup>Ž. Avramovski, "PitanjepodeleAlbanije u razgovorimaStojadinović-Ciano januara 1939 i stav nekih diplomatskih i vojnih licnosti", Prishtina, Godishnjak, 1965, p. 151-152.

In this way General Simović expressed his opinion that neutral stance of Yugoslavia would be the best solution, because Italy will be involved in expenses and efforts to combat with Albanian active tribes, whereas the position of Yugoslavian army would not change because even in conditions of an independent Albania the Yugoslavian Army always calculated a possible invasion from Italy.<sup>15</sup>

But the Italian occupation of Albania may have its consequences. The Albanian territory would serve to Italy as a standpoint for expansion towards the Balkan and thus Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia would be in risk, as an object of Italian propaganda. In this case the interest of Yugoslavia includes protection of borders from undesired attacks of Albanian rebels. Therefore, in case the Yugoslavian military intervention is a must, General Simović gave two options: (1) to prevail on eastern regions of Albania and to push the border towards the west, and (2) to prevent the Italian occupation of Albania or to preserve the independence of Albania. But in both options he calculated a possible conflict with Italy, or even with Germany. At the end he declared that the best solution was a possible agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia regarding the zones of influences in Albania. But anyway, if a military intervention was required, Simović drafted a military project regarding to Yugoslav interests and forwarded it to Government on 7 March 1939.

In the sphere of Yugoslav interest he included territories between existing Albanian-Yugoslav border and line of river Shkumbin starting from its mouth until river Shusice – Mali Shpatit – Gora Top – Maskosh – Lenia – QafeLirez – mouth of river Kolidon, river Devoll – Paltek – Pasha Tepe – Furka – Lufka – the border with Greece. The first phase included occupation of river line Mat, from the mouth up to the spring, then GuriNuses – villages Oranje-Shimil-HaniBebes-Mali Polisit-Turje, etj.<sup>16</sup>

At this time when Italy was preparing invasion to Albania and when Yugoslavia was calculating her response, the Great Britain was extremely concerned with the situation in other European countries, as developments regarding Czechoslovakia, but the most important issue for Britain were indications about a possible German invasion against Holland. The British diplomacy was used to receive intelligence from several sources in regards to Italian-Yugoslavian developments, emphasizing Prince Paul as a reliable source. The reports of Paul were acceptable not only because of lack of intelligence from other sources, but just because his reports ascertained British predictions about the role of Yugoslavia in Italian projects. The Italian proposal to divide Albania was seen as an indication or a will for better relationship, which would prevent the Italian aggression. The Yugoslav government made it clear to High Majesty Government that invasion of Albania without a preliminary consent of Belgrade will be treated as an alarm, whereas chances to reach an agreement between Yugoslavia and Italy were too poor.

<sup>15</sup>EmineBakalli, “Marrëdhënietshqiptaro-jugosllave 1929-1939”, (Phd Diss. University of Prishtina, 1984), p. 259-260.

<sup>16</sup>Ž. Avramovski, “Pitanjepodela...”, p. 152-157.

Therefore, being familiar with political situation and military abilities of Yugoslavia to react in such cases, Foreign Office believed that a reaction from Yugoslavia may come only if Yugoslavia was supported by Germany. But support of Germany was not possible due to alliance between Italy and Germany.

But in the beginning of February 1939 Stojadinović was dismissed from the post of Prime Minister. The main reasons for his dismissal were lying on his visits and his statements in Germany and Italy which have irritated the High Majesty Government, particularly when Anthony Eden advised Yugoslavian government to be careful on giving any impression which may make Germany to believe that she can count on Yugoslavia. In fact, Stojadinović was playing with double cards: on one hand he established good relationships with fascist and totalitarian countries and on the second hand he tried to preserve good relations between Yugoslavia and Western countries like Great Britain and France.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless the dismissal of Stojadinović, Italy was inclined to accomplish her plans. A note that Chamberlain addressed to Mussolini on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1939 facilitated Italian intentions. In this note, while expressing his concerns about international situation and move of Hitler against Czechoslovakia Chamberlain asked Mussolini's support to preserve the peace. According to Ciano, this note just had strengthened Mussolini's decision to act "*because in that note Mussolini found another proof of democratic inertia*".<sup>18</sup>

In these circumstances by the end of March Italy addressed a proposal to Albanian government to reach an agreement by which the Albanian government in voluntary bases will accept the Italian protectorate over the Albania. Albania hurried to ask for a military support from Yugoslavia, but Belgrade didn't reply to such a request. In addition to hopes to benefit something from conversations with Ciano, Belgrade couldn't dare to oppose the Italian invasion particularly when on its borders Yugoslavia was feeling the German danger.<sup>19</sup>

The refusal of Albania was followed by an Italian ultimatum in four points: (1) a military alliance and support for active military officers, (2) the monetary union and financial aids, (3) Italian deputy secretaries to be positioned in all ministries, (4) to protect the independence of Albania the Italian army has to use Albanian harbours, airports, communications and fortifications. The deadline to obey to this ultimatum was April 6<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, at 12:00 hrs.<sup>20</sup>

The efforts of King Zog to modify Italian demands through some contra-proposals failed. In a note released on April 4<sup>th</sup> the Albanian government declared that King Zog didn't consent with Italian requests which were harming the freedom and independence of Albania and that Albania will oppose to any Italian invasion.

<sup>17</sup>Milan Vanku, *Mala Antanta*, TitovoUzice, 1969, p. 130.

<sup>18</sup>D. B. Funderburk, "Anglo-Albanian relations 1920-1939", p. 121.

<sup>19</sup>Arben Puto, *Shqipëriapolitike*, Tiranë, Toena, 2009, p. 639.

<sup>20</sup>AIH, A-109 FO 371/23714, f. 2

Furthermore, King Zog declared to US Ambassador in Tirana that he will not act like the Czechoslovak President and he would never sign any agreement which is in contradiction to the independence of Albania.<sup>21</sup>

The ultimatum woke London's interest. During a meeting between British Ambassador in Rome, Lord Perth, and Ciano, held on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1939, the last one emphasized the right of Italy to interfere in Albania even without a preliminary approval by League of Nations. The British Ambassador neither the High Majesty Government reacted to the newest Italian standpoint. The reason of the silence was disclosed in a meeting of High Majesty Cabinet held on April 5<sup>th</sup> 1939, when the Secretary for Foreign Affairs reminded the Cabinet members about the special position of Italy in Albania granted by a decision of Conference of Ambassadors in November 1921. Therefore, the Cabinet concluded that if Italy takes any action in Albania, her actions should be taken in a manner which, on formal ground, would not perhaps be open to strong criticism.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, during a parliamentary discussion Chamberlain declared on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1939 that he doesn't expect the violation of British-Italian Agreement and there is no need to remind Mussolini about the provisions of the agreement.<sup>23</sup>

From above it appears that Great Britain had agreed in principle with Italian occupation of Albania. Therefore Great Britain and other western democracies remained silent when King Zog asked their support to prevent the Italian aggression. Furthermore, just to show his disregards to Albania, Chamberlain left his office on April 6<sup>th</sup> and went for 10 days leave in Scotland. The Prime Minister remained to his statement given to Parliament "*Great Britain has no any direct interest in Albania*". Great Britain hoped that occupation of Albania would calm Italy and convert her into an ally, as declared Lord Perth "*through a worldwide view point, the Italian-British friendship is much more important than Albania*".<sup>24</sup>

There were two other reasons why High Majesty Government refused Albanian appeal: that this might have been a play of King Zog to reduce Italian demands and to accept them at the end, and second, if Mussolini had decided to invade Albania then no any demarche would be respected by him except use of military force, but Great Britain was not willing to get involved in the war just because of Albania.<sup>25</sup>

Within the same day Mussolini sent a note to British Prime Minister offering formal assurances that the Italian-Albanian issue will be resolved in a manner that would avoid a possible crisis in Italian-British relations or in international relations in general.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States 1939, Vol II, Washington, 1956, Grant to Secretary of State, 6 April 1939, p. 373.

<sup>22</sup>The National Archives (TNA), CAB, Vol. LXIV, 5 April 1939, p. 204.

<sup>23</sup>D. B. Funderburk, "Anglo-Albanian relations 1920-1939", p. 122.

<sup>24</sup>A. Puto, *Shqipëriapolitike*, p. 637.

<sup>25</sup>Ž. Avramovski, "Jugoslovenski-Albanskiodnosi 1919-1939" *CasopisIdeje*, br. 5, Beograd, 1987, p. 79.

<sup>26</sup>TNA, CAB, Vol. LXIV, 7 April 1939, p. 241-241.

Following this note Foreign Affairs paid efforts to assure that Italian action will not be opposed by any counter-attack of France, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia. However, Foreign Office doubted about a possible secret agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia.<sup>27</sup>

According to British newspapers, who relied on confidential political sources in Belgrade, the Yugoslavian government will take no action since her interests were protected by agreements and that Yugoslavia was not willing to violate the Agreement of 1937.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, Belgrade was afraid to enforce the military plans of the Yugoslav Army drafted in March 1939. Yugoslavia calmly observed Italian invasion in Albania. Nobody in Yugoslavian political elite mentioned intervention in Albania neither the partition of Albania. This standpoint might have been influenced by Prince Paul. In a conversation he had with Ciano he declared that Yugoslavia had many problems with Albanian minority and was not interested to increase their number in Yugoslavia. But however, he didn't oppose to the Italian action in Albania.<sup>29</sup>

But when the Albanian Ambassador in Belgrade notified Yugoslavia that Italy was projecting occupation of Albania, the Yugoslavian government replied “...*the Yugoslavian government believes that Italy is playing and has no intention to occupy Albania...*”<sup>30</sup>

The Yugoslav Prime Minister, Cvetkovic, remained deaf towards the requests of Albanian nationalist to cooperate in case of the Italian invasion in Albania, whereas the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Cincar-Markovic, on the way back from Berlin published the new concept about Albania “...*the Albanian issue cannot be resolved through Tirana, but only through the Rome...*”<sup>31</sup>

This statement confirmed the accuracy of information provided by British newspapers. Yugoslavia remained silent on April 6<sup>th</sup> when Ciano informed the Yugoslav Ambassador in Rome about the Italian action in Albania. Although during all interwar period Yugoslavia maintained her military plans to oppose any Italian action in Albania, in April when Italian forces invaded Albania the Yugoslav Army reacted only by reinforcing her borders with Albania. This was a result of a policy when Yugoslavia gave up from her old allies and lined up towards the Axis.<sup>32</sup> Another factor that influenced Yugoslavia's silence were precautionary measures undertaken by Ciano. In order to paralyse any possible military action by Yugoslavia, Ciano had agreed with Hungary to mobilize 6 military divisions of Hungarian Army to intervene in Yugoslavia if Yugoslavia reacts to the Italian action in Albania.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup>TNA, CAB, Vol. LXIV, 7 April 1939, p. 241.

<sup>28</sup>*The Western Morning News and Daily Gazette*, Saturday, April 8, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup>J. B. Hoptner, *Jugoslavija u krizi*, p. 149.

<sup>30</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States 1939, Vol II, Washington, 1956, Grant to Secretary of State, 6 April 1939, p. 373.

<sup>31</sup>Arhivi Instituta Historije Kosove (AIHK), Fondi A-VII, F. 62, Dokumentete Shqiperise midis dyluftarave boterore, Beograd, 1977, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup>Ž. Avramovski, “Jugoslovenski-Albanski odnosi 1919-1939”, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup>V. Terzic, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941...* p. 241.

In such circumstances when Albania refused to accept the Italian ultimatum, on 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1939 Italian military forces launched an invasion to Albania. After a slight resistance Italian achieved to occupy Albania. Following the Italian invasion King Zog and his government escaped from Albania.<sup>34</sup>

The failure of Yugoslavia to react lifted British doubts for a possible Yugoslavian-Albanian agreement for Yugoslav intervention in case of Italian invasion to Albania. Such a doubt pushed Lord Perth to maintain regular contacts with Ciano in regards to situation in Albania and status-quo in the Mediterranean.<sup>35</sup>

According to the French Ambassador in Rome, Ciano provided assurances to Lord Perth that the Italian action in Albania was not intended to harm the independence and territorial integrity of Albania, and this meant maintenance of status-quo.<sup>36</sup> This was an additional fact that Great Britain was interested only in the preservation of status-quo in the region, therefore the occupation of Albania didn't pose any problem unless was enforced in such a way avoiding international complications.

A day following the invasion of Albania the High Majesty's Cabinet held a meeting regarding the events in Albania. Since the Prime Minister was out of the office, the Foreign Secretary informed Cabinet that the situation in Albania was fragile. From four available options: investigation, protesting, threatening or intervention the Foreign Office selected the first one. An important argument in this meeting was citation of Italian-British Agreement of 1938. The British Foreign Secretary declared that the mentioned Agreement will be considered not violated only if Italy does not harm the independence and borders of Albania.<sup>37</sup>

This attitude gives an impression that at this stage Great Britain perceived the Italian occupation of Albania only as a temporary act to bring stability in Albania. In regards to intervention in Albania, British Foreign Secretary pointed out that Yugoslavia was an important factor and it was impossible to take a step further than what Yugoslavia had taken.

He continued saying that it was impossible to send British Marine to Adriatic to attack Italian forces in Durazzo and Valona, or either was impossible to address a memorandum to Mussolini, which he would not accept.<sup>38</sup> The poor British reaction to Albanian issue had surprised even Ciano himself. In his diary he wrote “...*the memorandum of Lord Perth gives a sense that it was drafted in the offices of Italian Foreign Affairs, whereas British protests were only for domestic consumption...*”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> ArkiviKosoves, ArkiviDiplomatik Beograd, Fondi MPJ 1939, Kutia 3, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> *The Aberdeen Press and Journal, Sunday, April 8, 1939, p. 1.*

<sup>36</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States 1939, Vol II, Washington, 1956, Vol II, 8 April 1939, p. 380.

<sup>37</sup> TNA, CAB, Vol. LXIV, 8 April 1939, p. 240-242.

<sup>38</sup> TNA, CAB, Vol. LXIV, 8 April 1939, p. 243.

<sup>39</sup> Bernd J. Fisher, *Albania at war 1939-1945*, Purdue University Press, 1999, p. 30-31.

Following the Italian occupation of Albania Great Britain reinforced her assurances for Greece and Rumania. Those assurances were a response to Italian action and were aimed to preserve the peace in Europe. But those assurances had lost its values due to British standpoint regarding Albania. Mussolini and Hitler paid no more attention to British assurances.<sup>40</sup> Anyway, the Italian occupation of Albania was recognized by neighbours. On August 9<sup>th</sup> the Yugoslavian government issued a decision to convert the Yugoslavian Embassy in Tirana into a General Consulate Office.<sup>41</sup> On October 31, 1939 the Great Britain recognized the factual occupation of Albania by Italy. Chamberlain proposed L. B. Grafftey Smith as general consul to Albania, to replace A. Ryan. In his proposal Chamberlain stressed that “*it would be necessary to apply commonly to the Italian Government for official consul recognition*”. When the British government demanded from the Italian government official recognition of the general consul in Albania, this meant that Italy's sovereignty over Albania was also de facto recognized.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>D. B. Funderburk, “Nadir of appeasement and demise of Albania”, *Institute for Balkan Studies*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 302.

<sup>41</sup>Ž. Avramovski, “Jugoslovenski-Albanski odnosi 1919-1939”, p. 79.

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