

“The Spanish Adventurer”: Ottoman Surveillance of Aladro Kastrioti, the Pretender for the Albanian Throne

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Abstract: This article delves into the intriguing case of Juan Pedro Antonio Aladro, a Spanish individual whose claims of being rightful heir to the throne of Albania captivated European newspapers in 1902. Through an analysis of historical sources and contemporaneous newspaper articles, this paper explores Aladro’s background, his alleged aristocratic connections, and his self-proclaimed lineage as a descendant of George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. This work investigates the response from the Ottoman Empire, specifically the surveillance conducted by the Ottoman Foreign Ministry in light of Aladro’s claims, and highlights the dismissive view the ministry held towards Aladro’s ambitions, characterizing him as an adventurer driven by personal gain rather than as a credible contender for the Albanian throne. The Ottoman authorities closely monitored Aladro’s movements, from his travels to Corfu where he held meetings with associates to his subsequent journey to Naples, which created a state of uncertainty regarding his exact whereabouts. By examining historical records and newspaper accounts, this article attempts to shed light on the perception of Aladro and the broader context of the Albanian situation at the time. It also explores the intricate interplay between European diplomacy and Aladro’s quest for an independent Albania, as well as the skepticism foreign powers expressed towards his claims.

Keywords: Aladro Kastrioti, Albania, Ottoman, surveillance, espionage

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Introduction

The Lord is with us!

"I have the honor of transmitting to Your Excellency that Spanish newspapers are repeating some malicious news..." This is the beginning of a report sent on February 2nd, 1902 by the Ottoman Legate in Madrid to Tevfik Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of Foreign Affairs in Istanbul. The subject of these newspapers was Don Juan Pedro Antonio Aladro from the Jerez region in Andalusia. According to the newspapers, Aladro was well-known in aristocratic circles in Madrid for his good looks, English style of dress, and ownership of large grape fields and wine company called Domecq. He was also a cultured person with significant wealth and had created a valuable museum in Jerez containing Medieval artifacts, exquisite carvings, and magnificent tapestries. Aladro had entered a diplomatic career and eventually became the Spanish *Charge d'Affaires* (Deputy to the ambassador) in Bucharest. However, what caught the attention of the Ottoman Legate in Madrid was not Aladro's lifestyle but the news he was spreading in Spanish newspapers (BOA. HR. SYS. 130-2/ 9).

The person to whom this report was sent was the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Ahmed Tevfik Pasha. Born in 1843, he began his career working in the *Tercüme Odası*, which served as a translation office for the Ottoman administration. Working in the translation office required knowledge of foreign languages, a skill that Tevfik had learned and found useful, as he eventually would go on to serve in various positions at the Ottoman embassies in Athens, St. Petersburg, Rome, and Vienna and as the Ottoman Ambassador in Berlin. With the experience he had gained, he was appointed as the Ottoman Foreign Minister in 1895. Tevfik Pasha became a so-called crisis manager for the empire, serving as the Grand Vizier for three short terms during chaotic periods of the empire: one term in 1909 during the crisis aroused by the dethronement of Sultan Abdulhamid II, a second term in 1918 when the Ottoman Empire lost in WW1 with Tevfik Pasha thus leading the empire's delegation in the 1920 Peace Conference in Paris, and a third term when he became the last Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire, resigning in November 1922 after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the sultanate and founded the new Turkish Republic (Beydilli, 1989, pp. 139–140).

The Spanish newspapers' headlines in March 1902 argued that Aladro was heir to the throne of Albania. As such, the news claimed that the Entente Powers and European

diplomacy were worried about the Albanian Question. Thus, European diplomacy had agreed to help, or at least not hinder, Aladro's attempts to establish an Albanian state independent of the Ottoman Empire, with him as the monarch of the Albanian state.

The Jerez newspapers assure that the agreement that Russia, France, and Italy have adopted to solve the Albanian insurrection, has been to designate our compatriot Pedro Aladro to occupy the throne of Albania. (BOA. HR. SYS. 130-2/ 17)

Aladro claimed to be a direct descendant of the medieval Albanian warrior George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, a historical figure known in Europe as a suppressor of the Ottoman advancement in the Balkans in the 15th century. Aladro had taken the name Giovanni Kastriota for himself, the same name as the son of George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. However, he did not become widely known by this self-chosen name but rather by the name Aladro Kastrioti. In *El Correo* newspaper of March 26, 1902, Aladro gave an interview, claiming the royal title for his family, who were said to be descended from Skanderbeg and to have lived abroad for centuries due to being banished from Albania during the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans. Although he and his family had been living far from Albania for centuries, Aladro assured readers that, as the son and heir of George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, he thought about Albania day and night, delivering an emotional message to Albanians that "Your pains are the pains of my soul, and your aspirations are my aspirations" (Ibid.). He argued that the Great Powers would allow the scenario to take place where Albania gain its independence with him serving as king of the independent state.

European diplomacy will not fight us, because the work we are doing is a work of peace. We don't want to take anything away from anyone. We only want a homeland like all the peoples of the world have. Albanian brothers, our cry is: The Lord is with us! - The glorious name of Skanderbeg is our sacrosanct flag. With this, I cry on my lips, in the shadow of this flag, "Let us all unite, Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics." I, humble servant of the Great Albanian Homeland, request the honor of fighting by your side in the holy battle. (Ibid.)

While the newspaper claimed that the Albanian people had sided with their prince, it also provided information about Albanians. According to the newspaper, Albanians had preserved primitive customs and loved not only the independence of their country but also the independence of each individual, which caused a kind of anarchy and

resulted in many Albanian victims. Thus, observing all these primitive customs, the newspaper concluded, "Such is the country that our compatriot Juan Pedro Aladro from Jerez will rule" (Ibid.). Ironically, *El Correo* newspaper which interviewed him had placed the interview with Aladro next to stories on the Adventures of Agent Sherlock Holms (see Figure 1).

After the appearance of these newspaper articles, Aladro started coming under the surveillance of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. On April 8 just a few days after the Spanish newspapers published these articles, Tevfik Pasha received information from Madrid that Aladro had left Paris on April 7 and was heading to the island of Corfu (BOA. HR. SYS. 130-4). Corfu became an important place for Aladro, as it was close to mainland Albania, and he used to have meetings with his associates there.

On April 9, Tevfik Pasha received another report, this time from Paris, informing that *Le Français* newspaper had published news and an interview with Aladro similar to what the Spanish newspapers had published earlier. Thus, Aladro was attempting to internationalize his cause for becoming the King of Albania. Similar to the interview in the Spanish newspapers, the French newspaper repeated Aladro's call for the unity of Albanians despite the religion they venerate, but now he also claimed that the Ottoman Sultan had offered him to become the governor of the Ottoman provinces of Shkodra, Ioannina, and Skopje. However, being interviewed by the famous French journalist Henri des Houx who himself was a royalist, Aladro claimed to have refused this offer, for he truly believed that Macedonia would soon become an independent state, and this would lead to the Ottoman Empire losing its territorial link with the Albanian territory, ultimately leading to an independent Albanian state of which he would serve as monarch (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-5).

Tevfik Pasha had started to worry about the ideas that Aladro was propagating in European newspapers. In a letter exchange, Tevfik Pasha asked Munir Bey, the Ottoman ambassador to France, about how these ideas were being received. On April 12, Munir Bey replied to Tevfik Pasha, assuring the minister that "Aladro's candidacy for the throne of Albania is not taken seriously anywhere; it is even the object of general laughter". (Ibid.) Munir Bey continued by writing that Aladro was nothing more than an adventurer whose only ambition was economic gain. After this April 12th report, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry started referring to Aladro as "The Adventurer," often as "Adventurer Aladro," and more commonly as "The Spanish Adventurer."

On April 13, 1877, Tevfik Pasha sent a telegram to Rifat Bey, the Ottoman ambassador in Athens. In the message, Tevfik Pasha explained that Aladro was forbidden from entering Ottoman territories and instructed Rifat Bey to keep a close watch on him and keep Tevfik Pasha informed of his actions and movements (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-6). The next day, the Ottoman ambassador to France, Munir Bey, informed Tevfik Pasha that Aladro was not heading straight to Corfu as was initially expected, but would first be traveling to Naples. Thus, a confusing situation arose regarding the Ottoman surveillance, as where Aladro was heading was uncertain.

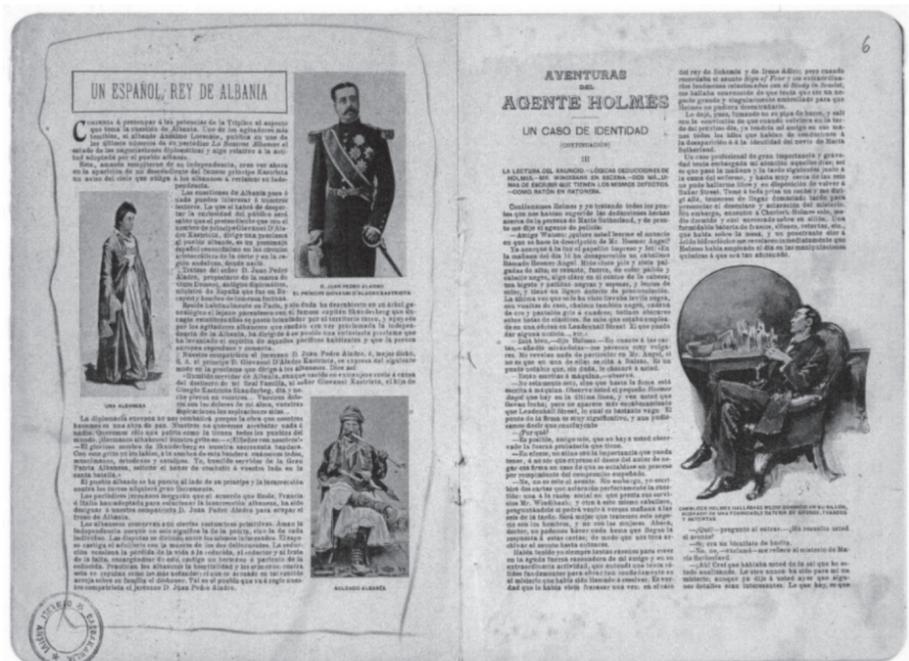


Figure 1. El Correo interview with Aladro on March 26, 1902, with the adjacent page showing the story of “The Adventures of Agent Holmes.”

Because of this insufficient information, Tevfik Pasha started to doubt whether Aladro was heading to Naples or Corfu, believing instead he might actually be heading to Athens. As the capital of Greece, which had won its independence nearly a century earlier in the Greek War of Independence, Athens served as a muse for nationalist revolutionaries. On April 20, Tevfik Pasha requested the Ottoman ambassador in Athens, Rifat Bey, to be vigilant and gather information or any clues that might relate to Aladro

being in Athens. Rifat Bey arranged a meeting with a Greek government official named Zaimis, and conducted what he referred to as a “kindly mannered interrogation.” Rifat Bey shared information that the adventurer Aladro was not in Greece, with all information leading him to believe that he was in Italy, and more specifically in the city of Brindisi staying at the National Hotel (most probably today’s Grande Albergo Internazionale Hotel). Zaimis promised Rifat Bey that if Aladro were to travel to Greece, the Hellenic Government would assist in thwarting Aladro’s attempts. While Rifat Bey kept a watch for any clue about Aladro’s movements in Greece, he reported to Istanbul that another Albanian nationalist by the name of Nuri Frasherri had come to Athens. Even though Rifat Bey’s April reports accepted Nuri as not being a dangerous person, Nuri would eventually come to be known as the person closest to Aladro Kastrioti (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-8).



Figure 2. Spanish newspaper calling Aladro the king of Albania.

Another person linked with Aladro had a tough experience when he traveled to the island of Corfu in May 1902. Traveling under the identity of Victor Benardo and presenting himself as an Italian pharmacist traveling to Corfu from Brindisi, upon arriving on the island, this man went to the post office and asked if any mail had arrived addressed to Aladro Kastrioti. When asked for his identity, the man refused to give it, so the postmaster viewed him as a suspicious person and refused to give any information about Aladro's correspondences. However, the man still retained his anonymity and insisted on receiving the correspondence, so the postmaster called the island's authorities. The Prefect of Corfu came to the scene, and after investigating, started threatening him with jail if the man failed to comply with his orders and continued to not reveal his true identity. After being threatened, the person admitted that he was Viski Babatasi.

Babatasi was not Italian but an Albanian from Konitsa. He was interrogated by the authorities and upon showing his identity, admitted to being the secretary of Aladro Kastrioti. Facing pressure during the interrogation, he gave intel that Aladro Kastrioti had given on the recommendation of Nuri Frasheri 15,000 Francs to Melik Bey Frasheri, to a person called Hayreddin, and to another person called Yahya Agha. This sum of money was intended for purchasing guns. This therefore became crucial information for Ottoman intelligence, as it offered intel that Aladro was preparing for armed operations against the Empire. As such, he posed a real problem. Nuri and Melik Bey Frasheri were relatives of a known nationalist Albanian family. Meanwhile, Babatasi was set free after giving such valuable information and headed to Athens to attend a meeting with Nuri Frasheri (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-11), most probably while promising Ottoman officials that he would continue to give information on Aladro and his associates.

The Postcards and the Flag

The propaganda that Aladro used for the goal of empowering him as a pretendant to the Albanian throne was not only limited to European newspapers or within the Albanian circles in Europe. Aladro also started attempting to acquaint himself with the common Albanian population living in Albania. Aladro became known for his printed postcards, which contained a picture of him together with a two-headed eagle heraldic. This heraldic is believed to have been the symbol of the Kastrioti family and had served as the flag of George Skanderbeg in the 15th century. These postcards used to be shipped from

Paris to the island of Corfu and from there were illegally sent to Ottoman Empire territories in Albania. The person responsible for distributing these postcards was Nuri Frasheri. One day as Nuri was departing for Athens, some of his mail that had been sent to Corfu was intercepted (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-14). His mail contained postcards with pictures of Aladro Kastrioti (see Figure 3), as well as a calendar written in the Albanian language. These were shipped to Istanbul as evidence (BEO. 1879-140894).

A decade later in November 1912, Ismail Qemali (Ismail Kemal Bey), who would be the one to read the Albanian Declaration of Independence and become the first Prime Minister of the Albanian state, made the official Albanian flag, similar to the one Aladro used in his postcards. The nephew of Ismail Bey, Ekrem Vlora, wrote in his memoirs that during a 1909 meeting with Aladro in Paris, Aladro had given Ismail Bey a flag, and this flag would become the official flag of the newly founded Albanian state upon his acceptance as Prime Minister (Vlora, 2003, p. 215). The same flag has continuously been used as the official flag of Albania even to this day.

In June 1902, intel started arriving in Istanbul. Ottoman informers had acquired the exact address of where Aladro was living. The reports informed that Aladro was residing in Paris, more precisely he was living in a luxurious house in Square Lamartine. However, the bad news in the report for Tevfik Pasha was that Aladro had started to correspond with Boros Sarafov (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-17). Sarafov was one of the leaders of a secret society known as the *Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization*, better known by the acronym VMRO, which had claimed an independent Macedonian state. Sarafov was also one of the leaders of the 1903 *Ilinden* uprising against the Ottoman Empire.

The calls Aladro insistently made to Albanians convinced some of them. In March 1902, a committee of Albanians in Shkodra claiming to represent all Albanian leaders without distinction of religion and to represent all Albanian societies and leagues existing at home and abroad agreed to make a supplication to Sultan Abdulhamid II. This plea addressed the sultan, complaining about the condition of the national schools and the lack of permission to use the Albanian language. This supplication also pleaded for the unification of four vilayets (Kosova, Shkodra, Thessaloniki, and Ioannina) into one single vilayet, with this unified vilayet having autonomy inside the Ottoman Empire. The unified vilayet would have one single leader, and this committee believed the best leader for Albanians would be Aladro Kastrioti, whom they called the Supreme Head

of all Albanians. The supplication pleaded to "Let the Sultan recognize him, and if so, Aladro will unite together with the Albanians at the Sultan's feet as a loyal instrument of the Sultan's wishes. Otherwise, the Albanian people will hold steadfast in claiming their rights and take care of themselves. God is with us!" The committee also warned Sultan Abdulhamid II that the Quran imposed on him as a Caliph to listen to the voice of the people living in his shadow (BOA. HR. SYS. 130-17).



Figure 3. Photo of the postcard from the Ottoman Archive.

Befriending Ismail Qemali

In April 1902, Aladro arrived in Vienna. He was spotted by Ottoman agents and his every activity in the city was watched. Aladro planned to meet with some Austrian politicians, but the Ottoman ambassador acted quickly and went to meet the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the meeting with the minister, the Ottoman ambassador convinced the Austrian minister not to allow Aladro to meet with any Austrian politicians, nor to permit any of his political activities in the territories of the monarchy. Facing all these barriers, Aladro left Vienna only a few days after his arrival (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-17/22). At the same time Aladro was visiting Vienna, the Ottoman authorities officially banned him from entering Ottoman territories (BOA. HR. SFR. 3. 520-24).

During this period, Aladro started befriending another Albanian nationalist, Ismail Qemali. Ismail Qemali had served as an Ottoman official for four decades in different important positions. In 1900, he had clashed with Sultan Abdulhamid II and, with the help of the British embassy, left Istanbul and started living in different European countries. First, he joined the Young Turk movement and eventually went against them. His role became crucial during the Balkan War in 1912, when in November he became the first prime minister of the Albanian state. In 1919, he wrote his memoirs in English, informing about his life and emphasizing his career as an official of the Ottoman Empire (Kemali, 1919). Even though he was not able to finish his memoirs because of his sudden death, his memoirs remain a good example of Albanian ego documents related to the Ottoman past.

Aladro met with Ismail Qemali and at the beginning of 1903 and agreed to cowrite a proclamation. The main text of the proclamation was written by Aladro, with Ismail writing the preface. The intention of the proclamation was to have it be sent to the high circles of European countries, but the Ottomans became aware of it when it was sent for printing. The Ottoman ambassador to Paris, Nebi Bey, took the matter into his hands and went to meet officials from the French Foreign Ministry. Nebi Bey requested that the French authorities forbid the printing of the proclamation, but the French authorities replied harshly to the ambassador, referring to an 1881 law that had been established in France on the freedom of printing in France. Some of the articles of this law made prosecutions inapplicable if the writings contained no public offense against a head of state or any ambassador residing in France. As such, the French Foreign Ministry did not view Aladro and Ismail Qemali's proclamation as anything illegal. However, the diplomatic pressure coming from Nebi Bey seemed to have convinced French authorities to recognize this proclamation as something offensive, who then prohibited the publication and its circulation (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-22).

The friendship between Aladro Kastrioti and Ismail Qemali was under investigation by the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. While investigating their friendship, another person was found to be close to Aladro. In a report written by Tevfik Pasha himself, Dervish Hima was portrayed as a person close to Aladro. Hima, an Albanian nationalist with a royalist ideology, supported the idea of Albania becoming an independent country ruled by a monarch. Hima initially was also part of the Young Turk movement and

had been reported to be someone close to Ismail Qemali and other Young Turk leaders (Hanioglu, 2001, p. 32).

Meanwhile, Nebi Bey, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, arranged a meeting with the Spanish ambassador, Fernando Leon y Castillo. Leon had previously served as the Interior Minister of Spain and was considered a high member of the Spanish aristocracy. During the meeting with Nebi Bey when the name of Aladro came up, Leon y Castillo considered him to be a person of low intelligence who made himself look ridiculous by pretending to be the future King of Albania. While talking about the friendship between Aladro and his Albanian friends, including Ismail, Leon claimed that they had no reason to help him with his claim over the Albanian throne; however, because Aladro was presumed to be a wealthy man, their only purpose was to extract money from him and to "...satisfy their personal demands." Even though Leon and Aladro were compatriots, Leon offered his help to Nebi Bey with regard to surveying and suppressing Aladro's attempts at the throne (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-24). The Spanish took the claims of Aladro seriously, as the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent instructions to their embassy in Paris in April to invite Aladro to a meeting and to request him to stop his actions and "...listen to reason" (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-25).

The 4th Albanian Congress in Naples

Italy in the 19th and 20th centuries had a large Albanian diaspora. The migration of Albanians to Italy started at the same time as the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans, particularly at the end of the 15th century and through the 16th century. In Italy, they became known as the Arbëreshë, while in the Ottoman Empire, the Albanians were known as *Arnavut*. During the 19th century, a big part of the Arbëreshë community in Italy helped with the efforts of Italian unification. After the Italian unification in 1870, members of this community achieved high administrative positions in Italy, such as Francesco Crispi, who became the Prime Minister of Italy in 1893. Members of this community including Crispi would urge Albanians regarding their national efforts while keeping in touch with nationalist leaders like Ismail Qemali. Crispi used to hold audience with them at Hotel de l'Europe in Rome, with the language of communication being Albanian (Kemali, p. 300).

At the beginning of the 20th century, three congresses occurred that were organized by the Arbëreshë community in Italy. The themes of these congresses mainly involved

deciding how Albanians should obtain cultural autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, with these congresses mostly ending by sending requests to the Ottoman Sultan to allow Albanian to be taught in schools in the Albanian-inhabited territories of the Ottoman Balkans. In 1903, a call for the 4th Albanian Congress was made. The congress would take place in the city of Naples, and an invitation to attend was sent also to Aladro Kastrioti, which he happily accepted. The 4th Congress would raise strong curiosity for the Ottoman state and Ottoman intelligence of the Foreign Ministry.

Almost a year had passed before the congress was to meet when Ottoman intelligence found information about the attempts being made to organize an Albanian Congress. A report from July 1902 raised suspicions that something was being organized by the members of the Albanian Committee of Naples. In particular, the name that appeared among the Ottoman intelligence was Luigj Gurakuqi. At that time, Gurakuqi was a student of medicine at the University of Naples, and his brother appeared to have been a teacher at the Italian school of Shkodra (BOA. HR.SYS. 125-50). Later in 1912, Gurakuqi would become the first vice-prime minister of Albania under the government of Ismail Qemali.

Following the information that the congress was to take place in Naples, the Ottoman diplomats in Rome started lobbying against it. Their chosen strategy was to convince the members of the Italian parliament to oppose the congress in Parliament, which eventually would lead to a demonization of their work. In the meanwhile, Ottoman Ambassador Reshid Pasha asked for a meeting with the Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Prinetti. During the meeting, Prinetti promised Reshid Pasha to do all that is "...legally possible to satisfy his request" (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-26). However, the Ottoman requests to stop the 4th Albanian Congress in Naples became irrelevant when a very powerful person vouched for the congress. This person was Ricciotti Garibaldi, the son of the famous Giuseppe Garibaldi.

The congress started on June 15, and now the main concern of Tefvik Pasha and other Ottoman officials became the question of suppressing and preventing news about the congress, which could be used as a means of propaganda by Albanian nationalists. While the meeting was adjured, the Ottoman Ambassador to Rome, Reshid Bey, invited some journalists to a meeting, and they agreed that the news coming out from the Albanian congress would not appear in their journals. However, this was not a very

honorable agreement between them. At least in one case, Reshid Pasha bribed a journalist with 1,000 Francs to not report on the 4th Albanian Congress in Naples (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-27). Meanwhile, Reshid Bey proudly reported to Istanbul that only one Muslim had taken part in the congress, Dervish Hima. Meanwhile, he was also investigating whether a Muslim woman had also taken part in the congress (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-28). The efforts by the Ottoman Embassy in Rome to stop the media from reporting on the congress may very well be the reason why finding Italian reports on the congress is so hard and why the 4th Albanian Congress in Naples cannot be found in the mainstream historiography.

Meanwhile, Ottoman agents were able to infiltrate the congress, and a report Reshid Bey sent to Istanbul on April 22 gives detailed information about what happened during the three days of the Albanian Congress in Naples. On the first day of the congress, June 15, 1903, the members agreed to make attempts to establish a league among the Albanian committees sitting in Italy, Romania, Greece, and Egypt. A strong emphasis was placed on past relations between Italians and Albanians by referring to a previous agreement years before between King Victor Emanuel II (d.1878) and Giuseppe Garibaldi (d.1882) to support an uprising in the Balkans against Ottoman rule. As such, they agreed on the first day of the congress to send a telegram to the King of Italy Victor Emanuel III, testifying about the devotion of the members of Congress toward the Majesty and the House of Savoy. The telegram sent to the king mentioned:

The 4th Albanian Congress aspires to unite the forces of all the Italo-Albanians dispersed in Italy, and thereby to come to the aid of the motherland, one and indivisible, as at the time of Georges Castriota. We beg Your Majesty to accept our most devoted homage. (BOA. HR.SYS. 125–53)

On June 16th, the second day of the congress, the members voted on the idea of lobbying for an independent Albanian state. However, they agreed that if this independence would anyhow lead to the risk of Albania's dismemberment, they would prefer to remain under Ottoman rule. The congress agreed to establish a journal that would be published in the city of Naples and be in Italian, French, and Albanian. On the same day, they worked on the administrative structure of the league, which would contain three presidents and various committees and sub-committees; however, the organizational details remain unclear.

On June 17th, happy news arrived at the congress: the response telegram written by the First aide-de-camp in the name of His Majesty the King Victor Emanuel. The telegram stated, "The Majesty the King instructs me to thank you for the tributes which you express in your last telegram and which was the object of high royal satisfaction." The reading of the telegram was greeted with cries of "Long live the King!" Before the congress dissolved, the members agreed to send another telegram to the Italian government expressing the wishes for the government to intervene in the liberation of Albanians who were exiled or prisoners in the Ottoman Empire.

While Aladro's role within the congress remains unclear, one can assume that his presence in the congress played a role in the morale of those who were present. His presence was symbolic also, especially on the first day when emphasis was placed on George Kastrioti and his relations with Italy. Also, the journal that was to be published as agreed upon in the congress was understood six months later to have been assisted financially by Aladro Kastrioti (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-31).

The spies of the Ottoman state were not the only ones working on gathering information about Albanian nationalists and their organizations. Two months after the congress in Naples, an Albanian who was himself part of a nationalist organization in Bucharest called *Shpresa* went and gave information to the officials of the Ottoman embassy there. The person's information gave up the names of the leading figures of the *Shpresa* organization: Pandeli Durmishi as the head of the organization and Kristaq Daka, who served as the secretary of the organization (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-29). Daka later would attend the 1919 Peace Conference in Paris and also meet with USA President Wilson; in 1921, he would also be appointed as the Minister of Education in Albania (Dervishi, 2012, pp. 107–108). Still, what interested Ottoman officials more was that this same Albanian had also provided information about how these two leading figures of the *Shpresa* organization had arranged a meeting with Aladro, with the meeting about to take place in the city of Pest. The Ottoman officials immediately started taking measures and sent telegrams to Vienna to prevent the meeting. The meeting among Aladro, Durmishi, and Daka was set to be held between July 9-10, 1903. The efforts of the Ottoman officials appear to have likely been successful, for on July 10, a telegram was sent to Tevfik Pasha in Istanbul stating, "The necessary measures have been taken concerning the individuals mentioned therein" (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-30).

After this telegram, no more information or telegrams were found to have been sent to Istanbul in this regard.

At the beginning of 1904, Tevfik Pasha sent telegrams to the Ottoman embassies in Paris, Rome, Madrid, and Vienna, requesting that the embassies send all the information they have on Aladro and construct a profile of him. The answers Pasha received from the embassies mainly repeated the information that had been sent since 1902. The reports included such information on Aladro as his living in Paris, his vineyard ownership, and his claims of being a descendant of George Kastrioti. However, what seems interesting in these reports is the one sent from Vienna. The Vienna report mentioned that Aladro had been having a personal intimate relationship with a woman. Meanwhile, the Ottoman intelligence in Vienna had succeeded in recruiting her to work for the Ottomans, so she would inform them of all of Aladro's movements (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-32).

After these reports sent in 1904, no more telegrams arrived for Tevfik Pasha regarding the Aladro case for the rest of the year. In 1905, however, Aladro Kastrioti was reported to be traveling to many places and meeting Albanian nationalists. In September 1905, Aladro had traveled from Paris and went to a meeting in Kotor, very near the Ottoman borders. From Kotor, Aladro had traveled to Dubrovnik, and on September 25 took Lloyd's ship traveling to Zara and Trieste. He was accompanied by a certain Albanian priest named Don Nikola. In his travels, Aladro was also accompanied by another person who was claiming to be the future King of Albania, Albert Gjika (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-34).

The Curious Case of Gjin Mati and Aladro's Followers

In June 1906, the Turkish Foreign Ministry received initial reports from Vienna. A 35-year-old Albanian named Gjin Mati Koka had been arrested in Trieste on June 5. Gjin had been wanted by the Ottoman government for many years on the charges that he had led an attack on an Ottoman military barracks near the town of Shkodra. Seven Ottoman soldiers had been killed in the attack led by him. After the attack, he was identified by Ottoman authorities, and a bounty was placed on his head. European countries were also informed that Gjin was wanted by the Ottoman state. In the meantime, Gjin had managed to cross the Montenegrin-Ottoman border and started living abroad. The Ottomans were informed that Gjin had even started working for Boris

Sarafov, the Bulgarian guerrilla fighter. The work he did for Sarafov was most likely that of a paid assassin. In the meantime, Gjin had also met Aladro Kastrioti and became an ardent supporter of him. In 1904, Gjin arranged a meeting between Aladro and 15 Albanians who were probably mountaineers from North Albania. The meeting occurred in the city of Trieste. While in the city of Kotor in March 1906, Gjin met a woman named Therese Asta, who had just divorced her husband. A romance soon developed between Gjin and Therese, and they decided to move to Trieste together and live there. Gjin now planned to become a family man and leave his past behind. Thereupon, he found employment in a railroad construction company and at the same time started a small rental business in Trieste. However, his past began to haunt him when, on June 5, 1906, he was arrested in Trieste. Three days later, on June 8, Theresa was also arrested (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-39).

Upon being informed of the arrest of Gjin Mati, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry immediately started working to find a way to deport him. Their urgency to deport him was not all due to Gjin's attack on the Ottoman garrison; the Ottoman officials also believed that he had good information on Boris Sarafov and his actions, as well as on Aladro's actions, in which they believed Gjin was greatly implicated. For the Ottomans, having Gjin in their possession could become a good tool for trying to implicate Aladro in the alleged assassinations Gjin Mati had done. The Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, Mustafa Nedim Pasha, was known for his beautiful mansion on the shores of the Bosphorus in Istanbul and took the matter into his own hands. Mustafa met with the Austrian member of the Foreign Ministry, Kajetan von Mery, who later would be appointed Austrian ambassador to Vienna and eventually be part of the delegation that was sent to sign the armistice with Russia in 1917. At the meeting, they agreed to start the extradition procedures for Gjin Mati. The meeting was followed by a formal request from the Ottoman government for the extradition of Gjin (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-39). Even though Ottoman officials took Gjin's case very seriously, he was never extradited due to the Ottoman Empire apparently never having signed an official agreement with Austro-Hungary that would allow such an act. At the same time, the Court of Trieste didn't accept the evidence that had been presented. Gjin was released on September 29, 1906, almost four months after his arrest. Again, Aladro was lucky.

In August 1906, the Ottoman Foreign Ministry constructed a list of the names on whom they had information about working with Aladro who they also considered to

be his associates and in his close circle (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-40/15). The list of 33 names was sent to many Ottoman embassies in Europe. However, the Albanian names in the list, such as Anton and Gaspar, appeared to be very hard to comprehend for the Ottoman officials. As such, Mustafa Nedim Pasha, the ambassador to Vienna, replied to Tevfik Pasha and asked him for the names to be rewritten in Latin script, because he was unable to comprehend them as written in Ottoman script (BOA. HR.SYS. 130-40/18). His request was most likely never delivered, or at least I was unable to find the Latin equivalent of this list in the archives. The list has the name of Luigj Gurakuqi, as well as a devoted follower of Aladro called Küçük Zef (Alb. Zefi i Vogël). He would become a resistance man during WW1, and later would be shot and killed in 1924 after an argument with another nationalistic leader, Azem Galica.

After 1906, Aladro no longer appeared much in the reports of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry. In 1911, he was reported to have finally visited Albania after 9 years of being banned from entering Ottoman territories. In June 1912, he was reported to have financed a famous Albanian mountaineer, Prenk Bib Doda, influencing him to lead a revolt (BOA. HR.SYS. 151-20). The reasons why the Ottoman Foreign Ministry suddenly stopped monitoring him remain unclear. When the Young Turk Revolution happened in July 1908, Tevfik Pasha, who as the Minister of Foreign Affairs used to lead the surveillance on Aladro, became the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire. As such, upon leaving office, his successor was probably busy dealing with the effects of the revolution. Another reason could be that, during this time just before Tevfik Pasha became a Grand Vizier, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire had been Mehmet Ferid Pasha, who was first cousin to the Albanian Ismail Qemali, and he may have in some way influenced foreign politics and foreign ministry in this regard. Another convincing reason could very well be that, after the Young Turk Revolution, one of the first measures the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) took was the abolishment of espionage (Arda Akıncı, 2022, pp. 231–253). As such, this would also have impacted Aladro's case. Or, they might very well have just not considered him a threat anymore.

After Albania's independence in November 1912 and its international recognition in 1913, the debate on having a king or a prince as leader of the Albanian state again was discussed among the European powers. The name of Aladro Kastrioti was also mentioned as a potential candidate for the throne, but Aladro's decade-long attempts at the Albanian throne had also led the European leadership to be discontented with him.

Thus, Wilhelm Wied was chosen in November 1913 to be the Prince of Albania. After this, all of Aladro's attempts at and expenditures on the Albanian throne had been in vain. As such, Aladro continued living in Paris and started dealing in the railway business. Just a few months later in February 1914, however, he died in a hotel (Elsie, 2013, p. 7). In March, Prince Wied arrived in Albania and sat on the throne to which Aladro had inspired

Conclusion

The story of Aladro Kastrioti sheds light on the challenges Albanian nationalists had faced in the early 20th century and the complex political landscape of the time. Aladro's unwavering commitment to establishing an Albanian monarchy and involvement in nationalist movements made him a target of the Ottoman Empire, which sought to suppress nationalist sentiments. The Ottoman Empire's attempts to capture and extradite Aladro also reveal their recognition of his influential role in the nationalist movement.

The decrease in surveillance on Aladro by the Ottoman Foreign Ministry after 1906 can be attributed to such factors as the Young Turk Revolution and changes in government leadership. The revolution had led to the abolishment of espionage, shifting the priorities of the Ottoman Empire and reducing its focus on monitoring individuals like Aladro. Although European powers had considered Aladro's aspirations for the Albanian throne, they ultimately chose another candidate, Prince Wilhelm Wied. This marked the end of Aladro's hopes and investments, leaving him disillusioned and marginalized in his pursuit of leadership, despite Wied himself going on to govern with Aladro's red and black flag.

Aladro's story reflects the determination and resilience of Albanian nationalists during this period and also highlights the broader political dynamics and power struggles that shaped the Balkans at the time. By examining Aladro's experiences, one can gain a deeper understanding of the complex web of alliances, rivalries, and negotiations that had influenced the path to Albanian independence. Aladro Kastrioti's life provides valuable insights into the struggle for Albanian independence and the political forces at play during this transformative period.

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