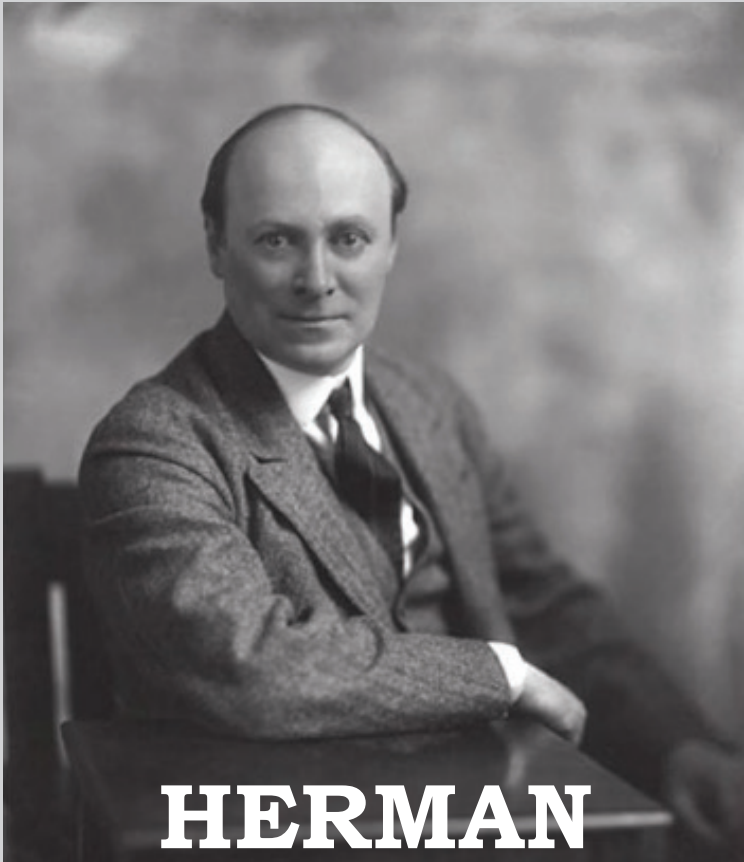


Mal Berisha



**HERMAN
BERNSTEIN**

(1876 – 1935)

Journalist, Writer, And Diplomat

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YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
15 W 16th Street, NY 10011
New York
December 2014

Albanian-American-Jewish Relations and the Contributions of U.S. Ambassador to Albania, Herman Bernstein (1876-1935)

“Tirana was to me for three and a half years a most fascinating listening and observation post. I found that though Albania has often been referred to as one of the most sensitive danger zones in Europe, the Albanians are a peace-loving people, and the policy of your government is unquestionably a policy of peace in the Balkans. I visited practically every part of Albania and learned to know and to love your people, whose simplicity, genuineness, hospitality and kindness have left an indelible impression upon me.”²

HERMANN BERNSTEIN

² The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies (New York): Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 752: “Farewell speech of Herman Bernstein” on the date when he relinquished as the US Ambassador to the Kingdom of Albania.

FOREWORD

I am an Albanian. One of the quintessential traditions I appreciate about my people is the *BESA*. *BESA* is the Albanians' Code of Honor, passed on from generation to generation. It guides our behavior towards guests and anyone in extreme need. Our moral code has been stated in this way:

“The Albanian home exists for the service of God and the sojourner.”³

That is why the Albanian people sheltered and protected not only the Jews of its own country but also the Jewish refugees being pursued by the Nazi Germans. About three thousand Jews were saved in Albania. In fact, sixty-nine Albanians have had their names inscribed at the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem, called “righteous among the nations.” Albanian Muslims and Christians alike took the highest risks upon themselves to save their Jews.

Albanians and Jews:

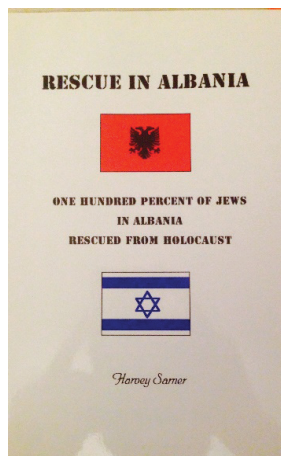
It has been my honor to highlight the life of the Jewish community in Albania over the last 22 years of my career as a diplomat, traveler and scholar. The first man who told me the Jewish stories in Albania was John Freely, professor at Bosphorus University in Istanbul. John is an Irish-American who teaches mathematics and also writes books about history. I met him in 1992 when I was serving as Albanian consul in Istanbul. He told me the fantastic story of the lost Messiah Sabbatai Zevi⁴ who perished in Albania. Over the years I became better acquainted with the history of the Jews in Albania, which made me feel proud for what the people of my nation had done during the hardest part of their history, for both Albanians and Jews. It was a time of holocaust! Yet no pogroms, no hate, no persecution, and no discrimination against the Jews were ever recorded in Albania. We are a small nation with a humble history and unique struggles, but we feel justified in feeling proud of our honorable dealings with our Jewish citizens and guests.

In 1997, during e trip in the United States, I discovered a book by Harvey

³ Code of Leke Dukagjini – New York, 1989.

⁴ The Lost Messiah: In Search of the Mystical Rabbi Sabbatai Sevi is a book written by Professor John Freely (London, Viking, 2001).

Sarner, *Rescue in Albania*,⁵ with introductions written by Hon. Joseph DioGuardi (former US Congressman and President of the Albanian American Civic League) and two Jewish Congressmen, Hon. Tom Lantos and Hon. Benjamin Gilman. That story was dusted off by DioGuardi and Lantos. The work fascinated me and I immediately translated it into Albanian.



From that point, every story about Jewish life in Albania captivated my attention. Among these, one man's story became my favorite: that of Herman Bernstein. In 2012, I was appointed as Charge d'Affaires and one year later Ambassador of Albania to the United Kingdom.

In London I met a 91 year-old lady named T. Scarlett Epstein, whom we sadly lost in the spring of 2014. Mrs. Epstein⁶, formerly named Trude Grünwald, was a professor of anthropology but above all a remarkable human being. She always made me feel proud when she would tell how she escaped from the Nazi Germans, from Austria to Albania during 1938–39, after the Kristallnacht. She enjoyed telling her story of escape in English universities, schools and synagogues. On the day of her funeral her daughter Debby addressed the audience, saying:

Mom always kept telling us: "Say whatever you like, do whatever you want, but don't touch me on this part of my chest [pointing to her heart], because there is a button there, and if you press it, it will automatically start speaking like a doll, saying: 'Albania Saved My Life, Albania Saved My Life.'"

⁵ *Rescue in Albania*, Brunswick Press, Cathedral City, California 1997.

⁶ T. Scarlett Epstein – *Swimming Upstream* Valentine Mitchel, London – Portland.



*June 26, 2013, with Professor
Scarlett Epstein, OBE, a Jewish
refugee escaped to Albania
(1938-1939)
(Photo courtesy of Andy Lee)*

During my tenure as the Ambassador of Albania I have tried to do my best to disseminate the Albanian-Jewish history. This is not merely because I desire recognition for what the people of my country have done, but rather to present to the world a rare model of coexistence, peaceful cooperation, and the absence of anti-Semitism. Such an example exists even today among Albanians in a troubled world split apart by hatred, war, and religious conflict. This is why one of the priorities of my job has been to promote this model as a unique example of human potential.

A CULTURE OF RESCUE: CELEBRATING JEWISH-ALBANIAN SOLIDARITY AMIDST THE HOLOCAUST

November 22, 2012

On November 22, 2012, the Albanian Embassy and the Wiener Library in London hosted a special event, “A Culture of Rescue: An evening



celebrating Jewish-Albanian solidarity against the Holocaust,” at The Wiener Library in London. *BESA* is a code of conduct that stands above religious differences. On this occasion, Professor Scarlett Epstein was decorated by the Albanian government⁷.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SERVICE AT MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY THE ALBANIAN BESA

January 20, 2013

On January 20, 2013, Middlesex University in the United Kingdom organized a Holocaust Memorial Service entitled “The Albanian *BESA* and the History of Judaism in Albania”



⁷<http://www.albanianembassy.co.uk/a-culture-of-rescue-celebrating-jewish-albanian-solidarity-against-the-holocaust/>

(keynote speaker, Mal Berisha).⁸ Albania was the only country in Europe where the Jewish population had increased during the years 1939-45.

EVENING OF REMEMBRANCE AT PINNER SYNAGOGUE

April 17, 2013



On the 70th Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the theme of the evening was “Resistance and Rescue.” Guest speaker included the Ambassador of Poland, H.E. Mr. Witold Sobkow, as well as two children of Polish Ghetto survivors, Janine Webber and Lili Stern-Pohlmann.⁹

BESA – “THE PROMISE” JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL IN LONDON

November 18, 2013

A screening of the film “*BESA* – The Promise” took place at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, London. It conveyed a strong message of Albanian decency towards Jews in a fantastic story of the reunion of a Jewish and an Albanian family after



⁸ <http://www.albanianembassy.co.uk/holocaust-memorial-service-at-middlesex-university/>

⁹ <http://www.albanianembassy.co.uk/evening-of-remembrance-at-pinner-synagogue/>

almost 60 years of lost connections. The Albanian Embassy in London was co-organizer of the event.

<http://besathepromise.com>

TWO MEMORIAL DAYS IN LONDON — ALBANIAN *BESA* IS HONORED



January 16, 2014 The Pinner Synagogue in London also screened *BESA – THE PROMISE*, a film directed by Jason Williams with the contribution of Norman Gershman. Mrs. Gaby Glassman said: “A tree planted in Jerusalem symbolises the extraordinary gratitude to the brave acts of the Albanian people who sheltered and saved Jewish refugees during Holocaust.” The keynote speaker was Ambassador Mal Berisha.¹⁰

BESA
The Promise
www.besathepromise.com

**THE UNTOLD
HOLOCAUST STORY OF
ALBANIAN RESCUERS**

The remarkable story of two men – a renowned Jewish-American photographer determined to document first-hand accounts of Albanians who rescued Jews during the Holocaust and an Albanian Muslim, seeking to fulfil his father's promise to the Jewish family he rescued.

AN AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY FILM
to be introduced by:
H.E. Mr MAL BERISHA
The Albanian Ambassador in London
PROFESSOR DR SCARLETT EPSTEIN OBE
A Jewish refugee rescued by Albanians

Pinner Synagogue
1, Cecil Park, Pinner HA5 5HJ
Five minute walk from Pinner tube station
Thursday 16th January 2014
8 - 10pm (Doors open 7.30pm)
Mat'riv 7.30pm

Tickets £3 can be purchased on the night at the door or from
www.pinnerishul.org/BESAThePromise

Refreshments

Pinner Synagogue

¹⁰ <http://www.albanianembassy.co.uk/ditet-e-memories-ne-londer-nderohet-besa-shqip-tare/>

AMBASSADOR HERMAN BERNSTEIN

The American writer and Jewish daughter Gertrude Stein once said, “History takes time; history makes memory.” This is true. The most remarkable history of Jews saved in Albania has taken time to be illuminated. We have come to learn through the history and memories of those saved that Albania was one of the few European nations that had more Jews at the end of the Second World War than at the beginning. Not a single Jewish life was lost in that country. Not even one. On the contrary, the number of Jews who were chased from other European countries, mainly from Austria, Germany, and Yugoslavia, were sheltered in Albania, thus tripling Albania’s Jewish population by the end of the World War II.

Since then, many Jewish organizations—mainly in the United States and recently in London, Brussels etc, jointly with Albanian, scholars, families of those who helped the Jews, and Jewish survivors such as Prof. T. Scarlett Epstein, Dr. Anna Cohen, Felicita Jakoel, Johanna Newman and Irene Grubman, have made efforts to unveil this story to the world.

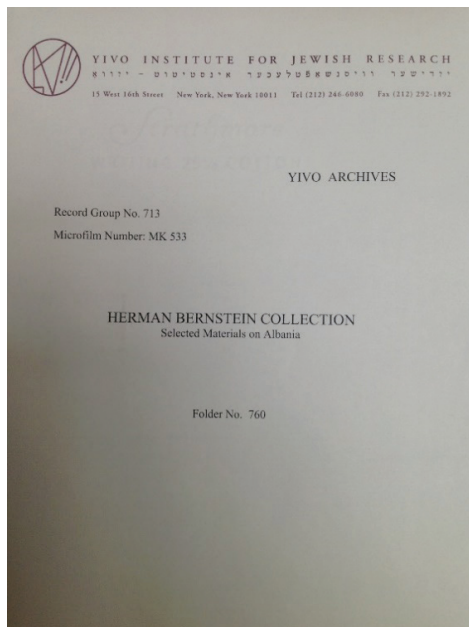
A small part of this dramatic story can be found at the life of the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Albania (1930–33), the famous Russian-Lithuanian-American-Jewish intellectual Herman Bernstein (1876–1935). This brochure intends to present an overall idea and understanding of the Gentile Albanian relations with the Jewish population of Albania and with incoming Jews seeking refuge during the period of Nazi occupation. A journey with Herman Bernstein—from Russia to the United States and Albania—will enlighten this excellent story. We will discuss his life, focusing on his merits as:

1. **A writer and a great intellectual:** the author of approximately fifteen books and translator of the greatest Russian authors.
2. **A Jewish activist:**
 - a. The polemic with Henry Ford: *The History of a Lie*.
 - b. Founder of Jewish Tribune, etc.
 - c. Bernstein’s work for Jews in the United States and Europe.
 - d. Bernstein’s advocacy for creation of the Jewish state.

3. **A courageous polemist:** Willy–Nicky: Sixty-five telegrams exchanged by two world leaders (German Kaiser Wilhelm II and Russian Tsar Nikola II) plotting against Great Britain and the United States.
4. **A friend** to President Woodrow Wilson and President Herbert Hoover.
5. **A journalist and a traveler** (the Russian Revolution coverage and the Paris Peace Conference).
6. **A great US diplomat in Albania.**
 - a. Bernstein's being the first Russian Jew to become US Ambassador and the support he received from American Jewish personalities.
 - b. His relationship with Albanian King Ahmet Zogu.
 - c. His correspondence with Albanian patriots.
 - d. His relation to Albanian religious leaders.
 - e. His plan to establish a Jewish enclave in Albania and his discussions with Albanian King Ahmet Zogu.
 - f. His discoveries about the Jewish Life in Albania—the False Messiah Sabbatai Zevi and his perishing in Albania; the *Dönme* Jews of him.
 - g. His contribution to the history of Jews in Albania.
 - h. His contribution in recording Albanian life, culture, religion, language, folklore, tradition, history, archaeology, and ethnography.
 - i. His forecast of Italy's dangerous politics towards Albania, published in *New York Times* in 1934 (Mussolini's occupation of the country came five years after he wrote the article).

BERNSTEIN – A MODEL DIPLOMAT

As a diplomat, I have learned from Herman Bernstein that everything we write—even the notes we scribble and the business cards we exchange—is an important record to preserve. Here is the cover of the Bernstein file, a collection which reveals his greatness as a diplomat, even though he was appointed to serve in a small country.



11

Herman Bernstein (1876-1935)

was the United States Ambassador to Albania from February 1930 to September 1933, a period marked by Albania's struggle under King Zog to maintain its independence between Italy and Yugoslavia. Born to a Jewish family he immigrated to the United States in 1893. There he worked as a journalist, writer and translator of Russian literature, contributing material to "The New York Evening Post," "The Nation"

and "The Independent." He was editor of "The Jewish Tribune" and the "Jewish Daily Bulletin." He travelled to Europe as a correspondent of "The New York Times," where he documented the situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe and covered the Russian Revolution for the "New York Herald." Bernstein met Herbert Hoover at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and supported the latter's bid for the presidency in 1928. In return, Hoover appointed him ambassador to Albania. Bernstein died in Sheffield, Massachusetts. His archives, including some writings on Albania are preserved at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

¹¹ The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 760.

Being greatly touched by the stories of the Jews who lived, worked or simply sojourned through Albania, I wanted to enlighten as much of their history as I could. One of my heroes is Herman Bernstein. His tremendous intellectual activity came to be rewarded with a post of U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Albania, an appointment made by President Herbert Hoover (1864–1964, in office 1929–33).

I discovered Herbert Bernstein's name while I was working on a book about another American, Charles Telford Erickson¹². The latter refers in his books to the contributions of Herman Bernstein in Albania as the American Minister of that time and also to their friendly relations. It was interesting to learn that when Herbert Hoover was Secretary of Trade, he gave Erickson 10,000 USD from his private account as a donation to the

Agricultural School of Kavaja, Albania, on the condition of anonymity. Bernstein was personally interested in the school's progress. Hoover's bill of donation was revealed only after both had died, in 1966. The connection between President Hoover and Bernstein was strengthened when the latter wrote a book dedicated to the former, "The Man who Brought America to the World."¹³ One of the best, although short, biographies of Herman Bernstein was published by the Albanian American Newspaper *Dielli* (Sun) when he was appointed as American Minister to the Albanian Kingdom.¹⁴



Bernstein was born on September 21, 1876 in a village named "Vladislavov" (in Russian; called "Neustadt-Schirwindt" in German or "Naishtot" in

¹² Charles Telford Erickson, an American missionary in Albania, scholar, humanist, diplomat, writer. Yale University Divinity Library Collection.

¹³ Herman Bernstein - The Man who Brought America to the World - Printed at the Herald-Nathan Press (1928).

¹⁴ The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 752, *DIELLI* (The Sun) Albanian American Newspaper, Boston, Massachusetts, Friday, Mars 21, 1923.

Hebrew) located between the borders of Russia and Germany in today's Lithuanian territory. He is the son of David and Marie Bernstein. His family immigrated to the United States in 1893. He studied in the States and married Sophie Friedman in 1901. His father was a Talmud scholar but died when Herman was a young boy.

Bernstein started to travel late in 19th century and soon became a correspondent of newspapers such as *New York Evening Post*, *The Nation*, *The Independent*, and *Ainslee's Magazine*. He established the *London Day* and the *Jewish Tribune* as well as the *Jewish Daily Bulletin*. Bernstein traveled often to Russia, even to Siberia, and recounted the situation of the Jews in that country. He covered events that have changed the course of the history of mankind, such as the Russian Soviet Revolution and the Paris Peace Conference. He published stories about these events in the *New York Herald*, *New York Magazine*, and the *Washington Post*. The activity of Herman Bernstein goes far beyond of the work of a journalist, traveler, writer, political analyst or historian. Bernstein, as one of the educated elite of his times, played a historic role despite the fact that he was not a politician. He wrote a series of books including:

- *The Flight of Time*
- *In the Gates of Israel*
- *Contrite Hearts*
- *Celebrities of Our Time*
- *The Road to Peace*
- *The History of a Lie*
- *With Master Minds*
- *Willy – Nicky Telegrams*
- *Herbert Hoover - The Man who Brought America to the World*



Bernstein translated a number of important literary works by figures such as Maxim Gorky, Leonid Andreyev, Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev, from Russian into English. His own plays *The Mandarin* and *The Right to Kill* were presented on Broadway. In 1915, Bernstein published a book, *La Rekta Gibulo*, in the so-called universal language of Esperanto. It is a translation of the story “The Straight Hunchback” which comes from Bernstein’s *In the Gates of Israel*.

Herman Bernstein soon became an intellectual *par excellence*. While traveling through Russia and Europe, he interviewed some of the greatest men of his time. The interviews, with commentary, were published in a book entitled *With Master Minds*¹⁵:

In his introduction he writes:

It has been my good fortune to interview some of the master minds of Europe—the foremost authors, scientists, philosophers, statesmen and artists. If what I have reproduced of their views on various themes

¹⁵ *With Master Minds: Interviews by Herman Bernstein*, New York: Universal Series Publishing, 1913 (Republished by Forgotten Books), 2012.

is not sufficiently vital or interesting, the fault is mine, not theirs.

The interviews collected in this volume have appeared during the past five years in leading journals in this country. I have made no changes in these articles now for the reason that I believe the student of international affairs may be interested in varying some of the statements of these great men concerning passing events and in judging their forecasts of changes in the future. ...

If the interviews in this little volume should lead the reader to a closer interest in the work of some of these famous men, or if only a glimpse may be gained by the reader into the prophetic earnestness of Tolstoy, the zeal and optimism of Metchnikoff, the brilliant whimsicalities of Shaw, the clever statesmanship of Witte, the keen penetration or [*sic*] Bergson, the passionate power of Andreyev, the analytical force of Harden, the love of the beautiful of Rodin, the fearless progressiveness of Ellis, the many sided erudition of Kovalevsky, and the quaint philosophy of the Sheikh-Ul-Islam, I shall feel that this book has served its purpose (pp. 3-4).

It is interesting to note that in every interview with these famous men, Bernstein never fails to find a moment to ask about the situation of the Jews and their problems, especially in Tsarist Russia. He was a great Jew who served his people in the most faithful ways possible. I would like to quote some of his dialogues with some of these men in the following interviews:

BERNSTEIN & LEO TOLSTOY¹⁶

I [Bernstein] asked Tolstoy to express his views on the Jewish question in Russia. ...

[Tolstoy replied] "There can be no such thing as a Jewish question. It is as if you asked me about the Russian question, the German question or the Japanese question. There is no Polish question, no Russian question—all people are brethren. It is very sad and painful if we must make an effort to realise this. If there are any bad traits in the Russian Jews they were called forth by the horrible persecution to

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

which we have subjected them. How do I account for the anti-Jewish feeling in Russia? We often dislike more those whom we harm than those who harm us. This is exactly true of the attitude of the Russian towards the Jews ... Just as I do not believe in witches, so I do not believe in these various national and political questions” (pp. 20–22).

BERNSTEIN & PREMIER COUNT SERGIUS WITTE¹⁷:

Witte remarks:

“One third of the population of Russia is composed of non-Russian elements such as Poles, Jews, Finns, Armenians, Tartars and others. Yes, we have more than fifty millions of people whom Russia took unto herself in her eagerness to expand, to enlarge her territory, and yet we are pursuing a narrow Russian nationalist policy. Empress Catherine II wanted more land, therefore she took the provinces peopled by the Poles and the Jews. But nothing was done to make their mode of life tolerable ... During the past twenty years Russia, instead of going forward in this respect, we made rapid strides backwards, so that now the Jews in Russia have no rights whatever ... When I served under Alexander III, who was the most autocratic of Tsars, he said to me one day: ‘Sergey Yuilievich, is it true that you are so fond of the zhidi (a degrading name for Jews)?’”

“Permit me to answer you by another question,” I said. “Could you gather all the Jews of Russia, place them in ships on the Black Sea and sink the ships? You would not do that, would you? The Jews must live among us. Therefore we must give them the opportunity to live as we do. In my opinion, the only way of solving the Jewish question is to give the Jews equal rights.”

Bernstein pressed:

“How can the condition of the Jews in Russia be remedied now?”

“The Jewish question cannot now be solved at one stroke,” answered the Count. “Now that the Jews have been deprived of all rights for twenty years, it would be dangerous to give them equal rights at once.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

Such a step, would lead to terrible pogroms. ... In a word, the only way of ameliorating the Jewish question is to give to the Jews equal rights with the Russians” (pp. 36–40).

BERNSTEIN & METCHNIKOFF¹⁸

Bernstein continues in *The Great Minds* by interviewing Elie Metchnikoff, the Director of the Louis Pasteur Institute of France. In the interview, among other things, Bernstein pulls out Metchnikoff’s concepts about the Jews in Russia. Actually Metchnikoff was a Little Russian born to a Jewess mother in 1845. He defected to Russia and became famous in France. In regards to the Jews he says to Bernstein (in June, 1909):

“The Russians have the mind, but the Russian Jews, in addition to that, vivacity and energy to a remarkable degree. Russia has lost many great talents by persecuting the Jews. Professor Minkowsky, the great mathematician was a Russian Jew who had to leave Russia simply because he was a Jew. The same was true of the other Minkowsky. My own assistants, Bezredko and Weinberg, are men of great talent, and I am sure that they will be shining lights in the scientific world. But as they are Jews, they could not develop in Russia, and Russia has lost them ... I feel quite certain that there will be a change even in this. The Russian government will realize its errors and will improve the condition of the Jewish people for its own sake if for no other reason” (p. 67).

BERNSTEIN - GEORGE BERNARD SHAW¹⁹

Bernstein then interviews another “master mind”: George Bernard Shaw. His interviews are always focused on the concepts of the people interviewed. However, even in this case he presses Shaw about his opinion on the Jewish question. Bernard Shaw answers:

“Since Pilgrims left their countries because of religious persecution, it was quite natural that they should take their religion along with them. But it would have been much better for them if they had taken

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

the religion of the Indians and developed it. At the present time we all wear clothes that do not fit us. We have the Christian religion, which is the Jewish religion, an Oriental religion and it does not fit with us. It was good for us when we were Orientals, when Judaism and later Christianity came into the world” (p. 79) ...

In discussing the drama abroad, Bernard Shaw touched upon the recent anti-Semitic demonstration in Paris on account of Henri Bernstein's latest play and upon the Jewish question in general:

“I could never understand what they call the Jewish question. I think the Jewish question everywhere is due to the Jew's business ability and honesty. If a Jew makes a bargain with you he means to keep it too. The Englishman will sign away everything when he needs money, but he does not mean to keep his promise when he makes the bargain.

“Of course there is no special antipathy against the Jews in England, but whatever there is, simply comes from the Jews straightforward business integrity, which infuriates the thick headed Englishman. I think that Shakespeare sized up the situation to a nicety in the ‘Merchant of Venice’ Shylock made a bargain with Antonio, kept it, and meant Antonio to keep it. Antonia, who is really a sentimental Englishman, was ready to sign away everything in order to get the money from the Jew, without the slightest intention of ever returning it. When the Jew wanted Antonio to fulfil his end of the contract the mob jeered and mocked him.

“This, I believe is true everywhere. The Jew is intelligent, industrious, and hardworking and when he makes a bargain he knows what he is doing.

“Of course, the Jews have changed a great deal. The modern Jews are fond only of music. They are almost as stupid as Englishmen.

“The prejudice against the Jewish race is still deeper rooted because people do not pause to analyse the prejudice. I think Macaulay was right when he said that if you start a prejudice against people with red hair there would soon develop a general hatred of them and they might be massacred” (pp. 88-90).

BERNSTEIN & PROFESSOR HENRY BERGSON²⁰

Bernstein also interviewed Henry Bergson, who was also a Jew. Bernstein asked him about the Zionist movement and the Jewish question, and received the following answer in May, 1912:

“To us French people this question seems paradoxical. We are so assimilated. If there were a new Zion I don’t think many Jews would go there. A prominent Jewish statesman, when asked in 1848 what he thought of Zionism, replied that he would be in favour of Zionism if he were given the post of the Jewish Ambassador to Paris ... I doubt whether the Jews have any special hereditary defects or qualities, considering that their blood has been so mixed—very much more than is believed. Whole tribes in Russia were converted to Judaism. I believe the Jewish question will be solved when the Jewish people will have attained equal rights in the countries where they are being persecuted. And the sooner that is attained the better for the Jews of course, and also for the countries where they live” (p. 105–6).

BERNSTEIN & AUGUSTE RODIN²¹

Bernstein continues interviewing other world figures such as a sculptor considered to be the Rembrandt of the Chisel. Auguste Rodin in that time was 71 years old or, as Bernstein describes, “71 years young.” The concepts about the arts fit very well among two men in conversation, which makes me think about the high profile of Bernstein vs. Rodin. One of the episodes from 1912 will help us to understand this:

Bernstein: “How about art and religion?”

Rodin: “Art is like religion. And the best religion is that which gives happiness at the smallest cost, almost without money, for after all the different ways of happiness are chiefly intellectual” (p. 125).

BERNSTEIN & HAVELOCK ELLIS²²

Bernstein continues his journeys to meet Havelock Ellis in Brixton, England. He was an activist of women’s rights. Both men spoke about

²⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

²¹ Ibid., p. 107.

²² Ibid., p. 133.

suffrage when England still forbade women to vote. Bernstein's interview with this English thinker is one of the best of all his interviews. It can be summarized with the final words of Ellis, when he says to Bernstein: "It is merely an act of justice and a reasonable condition of social hygiene." Bernstein's treatment of this issue demonstrates the breadth of his interests. Bernstein interviewed other great Russian writers such as Leonid Andreev, author of *The Red Laugh* and *The Life of a Man*.

BERNSTEIN & MAXIME KOVALEVSKY²³

In his attempts to learn about the Jewish situation in Russia, Bernstein interviewed Maxime Kovalevsky. There Kovalevsky describes the situation in Russia before the Socialist Revolution and exposes some of the elements that I would like to underline below:

Professor Kovalevsky had written, in that time, a book entitled *Jewish Rights and Their Enemies*. He gives a clear picture of Russian policy toward Jews during the times of Peter the Great, Catherine the Second, and Alexander the First:

- Jews and converted Jews should not be allowed to serve in the army and navy either as regular recruits or as volunteers, nor should they be admitted to military schools.
- Jews and converted Jews should not be allowed to take part in the electoral conventions of the Zemstvos.
- Jews and converted Jews are not to be permitted to serve in the Zemstvos.
- Jews and converted Jews are not to be permitted to serve in any municipal capacity.
- Jews and converted Jews should not be permitted to enter the civil service.
- Jews and converted Jews should not be included in the lists of jurors; they may not be appointed or elected to serve in courts, they may not practice as either advocates or attorneys.

Being made aware of Professor Kovalevsky's writings, Bernstein went to meet him for an interview. There are so many themes to explore here, but I would like to stress an answer to the following question by Bernstein: "What do you expect for the future of the Jews in Russia?" Professor Kovalesky replies:

²³ Ibid., p. 187.

I see therefore no reason to expect that the government will do anything in favor of the Jews, except propagating the myth that, once emancipated, the Jews are certain to be exterminated by the peasantry. I call this a myth because neither at St Petersburg, Moscow nor in the Province of Kharkov, where I own some land, I ever discovered the hatred which the workmen and the villager are supposed to entertain against the Jews (pp. 192-93).

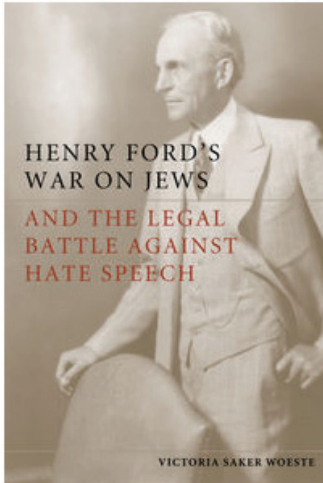
BERNSTEIN & SHEIK-UL-ISLAM IN ISTANBUL²⁴

Bernstein also managed to secure an interview with the Sheik-Ul-Islam in Istanbul. Their conversation is a model of good understanding and desire for the coexistence of different religions. Sheik – Ul - Islam states: There is no difference between Mohammedan, Jew, or Christian in the eyes of a true Moslem. All are equal. The only place where our ways part are at prayer – we go to the mosque, while they go to a synagogue or church. In fact, as far as we are concerned, our ways need not part even then, for we Moslems are at liberty to pray anywhere. We do not make the slightest discrimination against those who do not believe as we do. We look upon their goods as our goods, and upon their life as our life, and we try to protect them in every way. The Moslem who does not believe in Moses, the founder of Judaism, and Christ, the founder of Christianity, as prophets, is not a true Muslim. Of course, Mohammed, who came later than Moses and Christ, and who found the world in a dreadful state of demoralization, has improved upon their teachings. Otherwise all prophets are equal. As for non-believers, we feel sorry for them, we pity them, but we do not persecute them. Our sympathies are naturally with believers, but we are not angry at agnostics. Their conscience is their own affair.”

By the time Bernstein finished this diverse range of interviews, he had distinguished himself as a high class intellectual on the world stage. He continued with his agenda in the following activities.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 225.

BERNSTEIN & HENRY FORD & THE WISE MEN OF ZION²⁵



One of Bernstein's greatest works of polemics is his correspondence with Henry Ford, known to be an anti-Semite. That polemic is still an interesting subject for scholars in the United States. One of those who has elaborated on this story is Victoria Saker Woeste who, like Bernstein, has discussed Henry Ford's War on the Jews and the legal battles against Hate Speech. The story of her book is as follows:

PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION: TIMELINE

This timeline chronicles *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the most widely distributed anti-Semitic publication of modern times. The *Protocols*, supposedly the record of secret meetings of Jewish leaders, describes an alleged conspiracy to dominate the world. The conspiracy and its leaders, the so-called Elders of Zion, never existed. Although the *Protocols* has been proven to be a fraud on many occasions, it continues to inspire those who seek to spread hatred of the Jews. In 1921, *New York Herald* reporter Herman Bernstein published *The History of a Lie: The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion*²⁶, the first exposure of the *Protocols* as a fraud for an American audience.

BERNSTEIN — A GREAT POLEMIST

Here we find Bernstein revealing himself to be a great polemist and a true Jew who would defend his cause. Henry Ford had spread the news that he had allegedly met Bernstein while traveling from United States

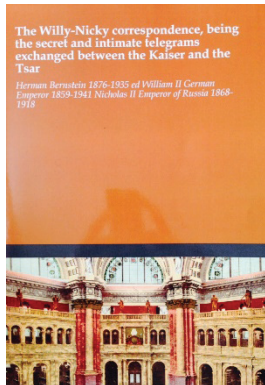
²⁵ Victoria Saker Woeste, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle against Hate Speech*, Stanford University Press, 2012.

²⁶ Herman Bernstein, *The History of a Lie – "The protocols of the Wise Men of Zion"* J.S Ogilvie Publishing Company 57 Rose Street, 1921.

to Europe. He alleges that it was a journalist named Herman Bernstein who told him that the only way to finish the war was to watch the Jewish financiers who had created it. “I played ignorance, I did let him go. He gave me most of the things that I have published,” continues Henry Ford. This statement was strongly objected to by Bernstein, whose position was later defended by many articles published in *The Evening Post and Herald*. Bernstein deserved credit for winning this public battle against a tycoon such as Henry Ford.

It is hard to believe that a journalist and polemicist not only won this crucial debate, but also persuaded Henry Ford to issue an apology. It is documented that Henry Ford himself would later endorse Bernstein as a Minister of the United States to Albania.²⁷ The episode was a triumph for human rights and for the rights of minorities and small groups against the language of hatred.

BERNSTEIN — A COURAGEOUS JOURNALIST — THE WILLY NICKY TELEGRAMS²⁸



One of the landmark achievements of Herman Bernstein is his discovery and publication of the so called Willy-Nicky Telegrams:

In his dedication Bernstein wrote: “To all who are working to make the world safe for democracy and for a durable, righteous peace, this volume is sincerely dedicated.”

He gained possession of these super-secret telegrams thanks to the work of some of his friends including Professor Tarle and Vladimir Bourtsseff, two historians of the revolution. What makes this

publication more important is the foreword of Theodore Roosevelt, then a former US President (1901-1909), who wrote the following letter to Bernstein on November 6, 1917:

²⁷ The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 713, Bernstein's assignment as a Minister to the Kingdom of Albania was endorsed by Henry Ford.

²⁸ Herman Bernstein – The Willy Nicky Correspondence, being the Secret and intimate telegrams exchanged between the Kaiser and the Tsar with a forward by Theodore Roosevelt – Alfred Knopf, New York, 1918.

My dear Bernstein,

I congratulate you on the noteworthy service you have rendered by the discovery and publication of these letters. They illuminate with a glare like a flashlight, the dark places of diplomacy of despots; they show what diplomacy in autocratic nations really is and what it has done and sought to do, right up to the present time. The whole world ought now to understand that the despotism of Germany was one of plot and intrigue no less than of ruthless brutality and barbarism, and that with a cynically complete absence of all sense of international morality and good faith it sought to bend to its purpose of evil the poor feeble puppet, who at the moment embodied the despotism of Russia. These letters should be made familiar to all civilized peoples. They show the folly of the man who would have us believe that any permanent escape from monarchy in Russia can come from the re-establishment of the autocracy, which was itself the prime cause of that anarchy – for the governmental condition was so intolerable that they put a premium on the production of lawless violence in the ranks of the lovers of liberty and justice and fair play to all. They show, furthermore, the wicked folly of all who would now treat with the German despotism for a negotiated peace, a peace without victory, a peace into which the wrong-doer and the wronged would enter on equal terms. This war was made by the militaristic and capitalistic autocracy of Germany, and it was acquiesced in and even promoted by the German socialistic part, which thereby proved itself traitorous to the workingmen and farmers of the world. With these documents before them, no Americans who hereafter directly or indirectly support the Prussinated Germany of the Hohenzollerns can claim to stand in good faith for human rights, for equal justice, and for the liberty of small well-behaved nations.

Let me repeat, my dear sir, that in publishing these letters you have rendered a signal service to this nation and to all mankind.

Very sincerely yours

Theodore Roosevelt²⁹

²⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

In his introduction to *The Willy-Nicky Correspondence*, Herman Bernstein writes:

“During my recent stay in Russia, I learned that shortly after the Tsar had been deposed, a series of intimate, secret telegrams exchanged between the Kaiser and the Tsar were discovered in the secret archives of Nicholas Romanoff at Tsarskoye Selo. Before leaving Russia, I secured the complete correspondence which gives a clear insight into the system responsible for the sinking of the *Lusitania*³⁰, the use of poisonous gases, the violation of Belgium, the enslavement of Jews in German Poland and Lithuania, the spurious promises to Poland, the sending of explosives in German diplomatic pouches to neutral countries of germs to kill cattle and destroy crops, the baby-killing Zeppelin raids, and the policy of *spurlos versenkt* [“sunk without a trace”] ...³¹

BERNSTEIN — FRIEND OF PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON

In 1919 Bernstein went to Paris with the American Delegation as a journalist. He reported from Paris for many American newspapers. The story of the Paris Peace Conference is very important for Albania and is entirely linked to the position of the United States represented by President Wilson and to the contributions of an American missionary, Charles Telford Erickson. The latter started his missionary work in Albania in 1908, when Albania was part of the Ottoman Empire. After four years of hard work and persecution he was deported by Serbs who had invaded Albania right after Turks left. However, he never ceased working for Albania until he died at 99 years of age in 1966. Erickson was called upon by the Albanian Americans of a patriotic organization, the Pan-Albanian Federation VATRA, to join the Albanian Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. In Paris, Albania was at risk of being split up and seized by its neighbours, the Greeks, Serbs, Italians and Montenegrins. In this way, Albania was to be shrunk to an insignificant province.³²

It was Charles Telford Erickson who informed President Wilson in daily briefs about Albania's history and why it was facing that situation. Erickson had known the wife of President Wilson, Edith Bolling Galt

³⁰ *Lusitania* was a British ocean liner, holder of the Blue Riband and briefly the world's biggest ship. She was launched by the Cunard Line in 1906, at a time of fierce competition for the North Atlantic trade. In 1915 she was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat, causing the deaths of 1,198 passengers and crew.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

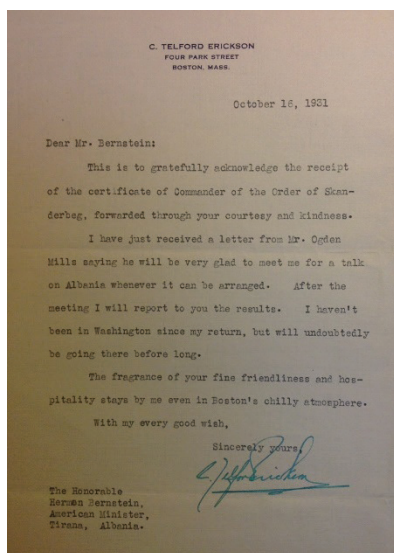
³² Erickson Collection – Yale University Divinity Library, New England, United States.

Wilson, because they both had worked for the International Red Cross. He took advantage of this connection and channeled through her all of the letters he was preparing on behalf of the Albanian delegation. In this way, he succeeded in convincing President Wilson to declare that America would never sign a final document of the Paris Peace Conference if the borders of Albania would be violated. This was the first of the two greatest contributions of the United States towards Albania in twentieth century (the second was the liberation of Kosova in 1999). When we analyze relations between Erickson and the American Delegation led by President Wilson, and between Erickson and Bernstein, we attain a better understanding of how these people worked for Albania. In the thirties they both worked for American-Albanian projects: Erickson as a missionary and Bernstein as a diplomat.³³

BERNSTEIN — FRIEND OF PRESIDENT HERBERT HOOVER

In 1929 Herbert Hoover became the 31st President of the United States and would serve until 1933. It is worth mentioning that President Hoover had served as the Secretary of Commerce from 1921 to 1928. In 1925 he gave a donation of 10,000 US dollars on the condition of anonymity (because it was considered a conflict of interest) for the Agricultural School of Kavaja in Albania, soon to be established by Charles Erickson³⁴. That money was given from his personal account, something that was discovered only after Erickson's death in 1966.

The relations between Hoover and Erickson, between Hoover and Bernstein, and—after Bernstein assumed his position in Tirana—between Erickson



³³ The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 668-69.

³⁴ Today the Agricultural School of Kavaja is named "Charles Telford Erickson" and is still in operation.

and Bernstein, have all had a long-enduring, positive influence on American-Albanian relations. Regarding Herbert Hoover a great man, Bernstein wrote his book *The Man who Brought America to the World*.

BERNSTEIN — AMERICAN MINISTER IN ALBANIA³⁵

Bernstein assumed his position as American Minister to the Albanian Kingdom on February 17, 1930.³⁶ He presented his letters of credence to King Zog of Albania on April 28, 1930 and relinquished on September 24, 1933. His assignment was warmly welcomed by the Jewish Organization in United States. I would like to underline a few facts:

1. Bernstein was the first Russian Jew to be assigned US Ambassador.
2. He was the first Jew assigned Minister of the United States, not only as a fundraiser but as an intellectual.
3. Albania was proud of him both in that time and today as we learn more about his activity as a US diplomat.

Upon his appointment he received congratulatory letters from various prestigious Jewish personalities and institutions.



Bernstein and the staff of the US Legation in Tirana, Albania

³⁵ The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 713.

³⁶ Ibid.Folder 752.

BERNSTEIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO ENLIGHTEN THE ALBANIAN QUESTION IN THE WORLD

HERMAN BERNSTEIN — "ALBANIA, THE BELGIUM OF THE BALKANS"³⁷

Bernstein explains in his diplomatic reports why Albania is referred as the most dangerous zone of Europe where a war is likely to start. He gives a picture of the country in such a beautiful way: "Albania has been called 'Europe's Forgotten Land,' 'Cinderella among the Nations,' 'Land of the Paradox,' 'Key to the Adriatic,' and 'the Belgium of the Balkans.'" He writes:

Albania's history dates back to the pre-Christian era. The city of Durazzo, known ancient times as Durrahium, is twenty-seven centuries old. The Albanians are believed to have descended from the ancient Illyrians. Alexander the Great of Macedon was a son of an Albanian princess. The town of Butrint, in Southern Albania, where recent excavations brought back age-old scenes immortalized by Virgil, has a remarkable amphitheatre more than two thousand years old. Feniks Hill near Saranda in Southern Albania is surrounded by series of massive walls which makes the place one of the most highly fortified and largest acropolises of the classic world. The tribes of Epirus, the Greeks, the Romans, the Slavs, and finally the Turks took possession of Albania and endeavoured to suppress the people by imposing their own nationalities, languages, and customs upon the sturdy mountaineers, but without complete success. Even the five hundred years of Turkish rule, during which they were forced to embrace Muhammadanism, did not thwart the indomitable spirit of independence among the North Albanian mountaineers, and notwithstanding the most drastic suppression of Albanian schools, books and newspapers, the Albanian language has survived.

³⁷ Ibid., Folder 760.

REASONS WHY ALBANIA HAS LOST FAITH IN THE ITALIANS³⁸

Bernstein was very concerned about the influence of Duce on Albania and his dreams to expand the Italian territories beyond the Adriatic Sea on the east. In a large article he tackles many subjects of Albanian-Italian relations. On September 5, 1939, Bernstein remarked “Why is Italy so eager to restore cordial collaboration with Albania, to pour vast sums of money into the little country? The answer is that Albania, by geographical position, holds the keys to the Adriatic. From a strategic viewpoint Albania’s coastline, especially the port of Valona, would be of inestimable value to Italy in the event of war. In the Balkans people still believe in Mussolini’s imperialist ambition of reconquering the famous Roman Via Egnatia, which leads through Albania to Salonica and Constantinople.”³⁹

BERNSTEIN ON ALBANIAN RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE — A PILGRIMAGE TO ELBASAN⁴⁰

Bernstein went to Elbasan to attend a ceremony at the Orthodox monastery. He described the ceremony being attended by Christians, Muslims and Bektashis alike. It showed perhaps the first and the only case in the world where people of the same nation of different religions attended such an interesting ceremony together. It has been God’s will and our good fortune that, even today, Albanians celebrate together. Bernstein rightly ascertained that Albanians all share the common faith of Albanianism. This fact was reconfirmed on September 21, 2014 when Pope Francis visited Tirana. More than three hundred thousand Albanians rushed down in the streets of their capital to greet the Holy Father, half of them being Muslims.

³⁸ Ibid., Folder 750,

³⁹ Ibid., 752.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Folder 760.



*Albania – A country
of religious tolerance
- Bernstein among
clergy*

performing miracles ... Every year Christians and Muslims alike join in prying to him at the monastery. Ever since the eleventh century, St. John of Vladimir has shown his miraculous powers. I myself have often been saved by him.”⁴¹

1933 – KING ZOG TELLS HIS STORY TO HERMAN BERNSTEIN⁴²

There has been so much speculation about the true history of King Zog of Albania. He was deposed by the Italians in 1939. Post-war historiography completely manipulated his story under the political directives of the communist establishment. The only true history about him was written by Herman Bernstein.

However, that history remained unknown for a long time, sealed up in the archives. It was Dr. Elez Biberaj, the Albanian-American and well-known journalist of the Voice of America, who first searched for



⁴¹ Ibid., Folder 713.

⁴² Ibid., Folder 760.

Bernstein's account in the YIVO archive, in 1980. He published excerpts of that history in that time.⁴³

The Canadian Albanian scholar Robert Elsie wrote: "Ahmed Zogu (1895-1961), who reigned from 1928 to 1939 as King Zog I of the Albanians, did not leave any writings as such. Educated in Istanbul, he was orally fluent in several languages. The closest history of him is the thirty-page document serving as his autobiography. It was written down in English in 1933 by Herman Bernstein (1876-1935), the American Ambassador

in Tirana, who calls it 'The life story of the Albanian ruler, told by himself in the third person.' The story is, as one would expect, flattering but it is not by any means a work of historical accuracy. Nonetheless, it provides an insight into how King Zog viewed himself and his country's history and development".⁴⁴



This is a picture of the Albanian King Ahmet Zogu, gifted as a postcard to Ambassador Herman Bernstein⁴⁵

⁴³ Dr Elez Biberaj – *Gazeta Dielli* (The Sun,) October 15, 1980).

⁴⁴ "Ahmed Zogu: King Zog Tells his Story" at http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts20_2/AH1933.html (accessed November 22, 2014); and "Herman Bernstein: Little Albania is the Pawn in a Great Diplomatic Game" at the Archive of YIVO Institute for

Jewish Studies - New York (Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 934), republished at http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts20_2/AH1934.html (accessed November 22, 2014).

⁴⁵ Ibid., Folder 713.

BERNSTEIN: A GREAT DIPLOMAT

During his appointment, he worked on negotiation and extradition treaties between the U.S. and Albania. Two of these treaties were bilaterally signed during his time as Ambassador in Tirana, Albania. Bernstein also received an award from King Zog for his service to Albania, the Grand Cordon of the Order of Skanderbeg.



*Bernstein and
Prime Minister Vangjeli*



*Bernstein
at King Zog's Palace*

BERNSTEIN AND KING ZOG SPEAK ABOUT A JEWISH ENCLAVE IN ALBANIA

King Zog and Ambassador Bernstein spoke about the possibility of establishing a Jewish enclave in Albanian territory. In that time when Jews all over Europe were being faced with Nazi racism, Bernstein

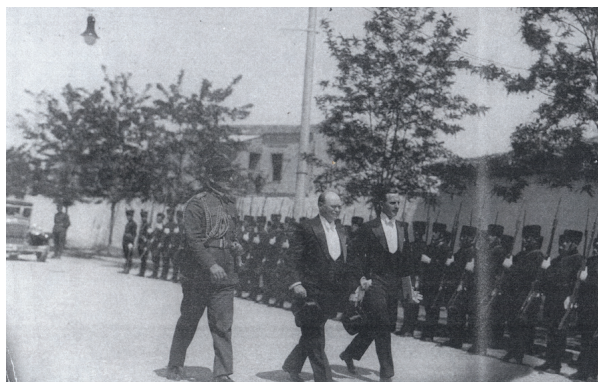


wanted to do something to create a safe haven for a significant number of Jews. Herman Bernstein was on good terms with King Zog.⁴⁶

BERNSTEIN DISCOVERS THE HISTORY OF JEWS IN VLORA

Herman Bernstein recorded the testimony of Joseph Matattia, member of the City Hall of Vlora. Among other things, he says that “based on hearsay, a Jewish colony emigrated here from Venice during the first Venetian occupation about five centuries ago. The Turks captured this country from Venetians and the Jews fled from this occupation. When the Venetians captured this country again the Jews returned. But when the Turks’ second occupation took place, the Jews fled and went to all directions...

“At the present time the Jewish community here consists of ten families or sixty souls. Our community in Ioannina possesses a very old book which is said to have belonged to the Valona Synagogue. It is said it was taken during the second exodus from here. I would not say that book is religious but it is very precious.”⁴⁷



An unidentified photo of Bernstein during a day of parade

⁴⁶ Ibid., Folder 750.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Folder 934.

BERNSTEIN'S INTEREST IN ARCHAEOLOGY; THE SYNAGOGUE IN SARANDA, ALBANIA

Remains of the 5th century Synagogue of Saranda – South of Albania (Photo courtesy of Lorena Rroshi)



Bernstein was much interested in archaeological discoveries. He had a personal acquaintance with the Italian archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini. Later on the impressive remains of a fifth or sixth century synagogue were uncovered by the Albanian Academy of Sciences and the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology. The archaeologists discovered that the synagogue underwent various periods of use, including its conversion into a church at its final stage. Particularly noteworthy among the finds are two mosaic pavements. At the centre of one of them is a seven-branched candelabrum, flanked by a citron (a fruit similar to a lemon), and also a ram's horn—all symbols associated with Jewish holidays. The other mosaic pavement includes a variety of animals, trees, and symbols alluding to Biblical lore, together with the facade of a structure resembling a temple (possibly a shrine for the Torah)⁴⁸.

ELOQUENT SPEECHES OF HERMAN BERNSTEIN

On 200 anniversary of G Washington – Bernstein addresses an audience:

“It is my privilege to celebrate this historic occasion in Albania whose people suffered and struggled so long before they have attained their independence, and whose own hero, Scanderbeg, was one of the world’s greatest personalities both as a leader of men and as a champion of

⁴⁸ Albanian Institute of Archaeology.

his people's independence. To celebrate the bicentennial birthday of George Washington it is my honor and pleasure to dedicate the seeds of tree brought from Mount Vermont the home of Washington, and plant them in Albanian soil, on the grounds of American Legation."⁴⁹

BERNSTEIN — A DAY OF WORK AS AMBASSADOR TO TIRANA SEEN FROM THE WINDOW OF HIS OFFICE⁵⁰



Bernstein and King Zog on the day of inauguration of the US Legation in Tirana, November 27, 1930.

The US Embassy in Tirana, Albania was the first embassy building to have been erected by the American government in the world. The American Legation was inaugurated on the Day of Thanksgiving on November 27, 1930, therefore it is a historical site. Ambassador Bernstein inaugurated it in 1930. He gives us a picture of the view as he could see it through his office window.

This piece was published by the editor of the American Foreign Service Association:

From the windows of the new American Legation in Tirana one can see many quaint and fascinating sights which present a picture of Albanian life in all its variegated colours and shades ... In front of the Legation gates the new road leads from Durazzo to Elbasani and Kortcha. Durazzo on the Adriatic is the most important sea port. Built about 700 years before the Christian era, known in the past as *Dyrrhachium*, it witnessed scenes of glory, of bloody battles, of the conflicts between the armies of Caesar and Pompey, and of Crusaders

⁴⁹ The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 752.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Folder 752.

on their way to Holy Land. It is believed that there, too, St. Paul preached Christianity.



America is popular in Albania for several reasons. Albania is grateful to America for the late President Wilson's aid given to the cause of Albanian independence at a very critical period during the Peace Conference.

Other reasons for

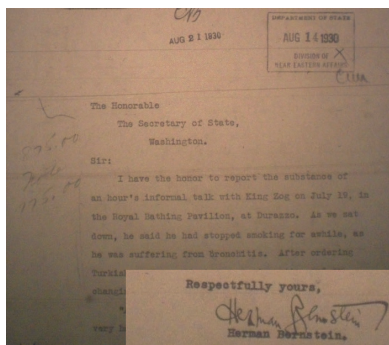
Albania's appreciation of America are the American Schools in Tirana and Kavaja, conducted by the American Red Cross and Near East Foundation and malaria work of the Rockefeller Foundation...

Beyond these Alps is Kruja, the home of Skanderbeg, George Castrioti the Albanian George Washington whose praise was sung by Longfellow in his *Tales of Wayside Inn*. From my window I see the famous road Via Egnatia...

The people know not religious conflicts or strife in Albania. The religious heads of the Muslims, the Catholics and the Orthodox live in harmony, and their followers occasionally worship in one another's house of prayer...

Someday the tourists in quest of strange and beautiful scenery of peculiar customs and costumes that are different, will discover the quaintest of European lands. If they delay their visit to Albania, they will be too late ...⁵¹

⁵¹ Herman Bernstein - The *New York Times*, New York, January 28, 1934.



Herman Bernstein (second from the right) during a ceremonial Day in Tirana.⁵²

BERNSTEIN—FRIEND OF ALBANIAN INTELLECTUALS ALEXANDER MOISI, LEF NOSI, GJERGJ FISHTA, FAIK KONICA, TERENCE TOCI

Lef Nosi⁵³

Bernstein had strong relations with Albanian intellectuals. Lef Nosi, a Christian orthodox from Elbasan, had promised Bernstein to give him a script of Jewish history or their historical presence in his town. He perused the manuscripts of Evliya Çelebi, a famous Turkish traveler who recorded everything during his trip in Albania in the sixteenth century. Lef Nosi provided evidence of the Jews who were mostly sojourners in the city of Elbasan.

The history of relations between Lef Nosi and the Jews in Albania is tragic. During the times of Nazi occupation, Lef Nosi sheltered a Jewish family in his house. That family was safe until the communists took power in Albania at the end of 1944. A few weeks after the war, the communist police were chasing Nosi because he was considered an anti-communist. Lef went into hiding. He thought that he might obtain shelter at the Jewish family he had helped when they were in a similar plight. The Jewish family sheltered him for some days, but later on the communists discovered and arrested him, later executing him without a trial.

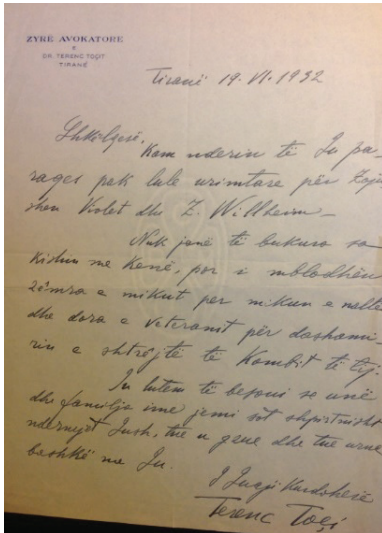
⁵² The Archive of YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies - New York - Herman Bernstein Collection, Folder 934.

⁵³ Ibid., Folder 829.

Father Gjergj Fishta:

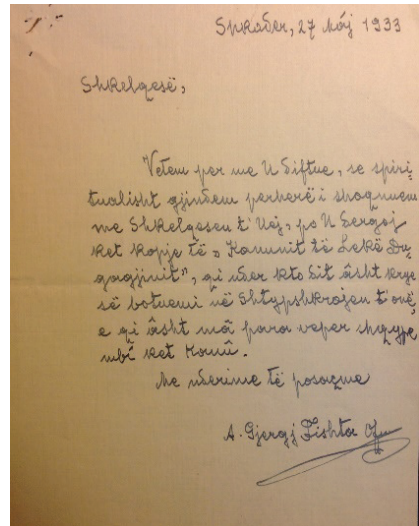
Bernstein had strong relations and correspondence with At (Father) Gjergj Fishta, the Albanian Homer of modern times. Fishta was a Catholic priest, a writer and a poet. He gave Bernstein a copy of the *Code of Lek Dukagjini* that presents the Albanian *BESA* as the foundation of

the nation's high morality. He also had relations with Terenc Toci, a tragic figure from the Albanian diaspora of Italy who went to Albania to help the liberation of his ancestor's country and who was eventually executed by the communists.



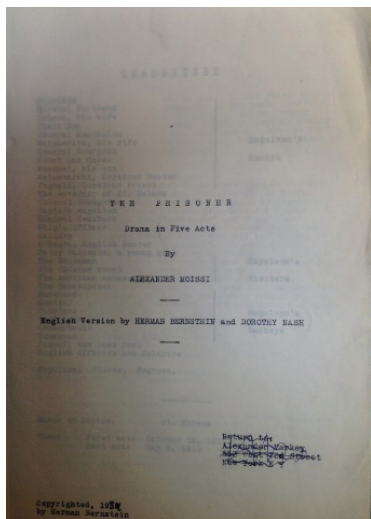
A letter from Terenc Toci to Ambassador Bernstein⁵⁴

A letter from Father Gjergj Fishta to Ambassador Bernstein.⁵⁵



⁵⁴ Ibid., Folder 756.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Folder 758.



First page of “The Prisoner,” a drama written by Alexander Moisiu, translated from German into English by Herman Bernstein and his daughter Dorothy Nash.⁵⁶

Alexander Moisiu:

Moisiu was a famous Albanian-Austrian theatre actor. He played Hamlet and Macbeth. He wrote a drama in German, “The Prisoner,” dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte. Herman Bernstein translated it into English. It is interesting to see how Bernstein maintained strong ties with Albanian intellectuals in the world.

Faik Konica:

In other occasions we will see how strongly he was connected to Faik Konica, a famous Albanian writer and the homologue of Bernstein in Washington DC at the same time. Konica, while serving as the Minister of Albania to the United States, delivered the Order of Skanderbeg that had been granted by King Zog of Albania to Bernstein soon after he had relinquished his position as the American Minister in Albania.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Folder 971.

ALBANIAN LEGATION
WASHINGTON

January 10, 1934

Dear Mr. Minister:

I spent a few days in New York but thought all the time that you were still in Sheffield, Massachusetts. I found your letter on my return here, and deeply regret that I missed the opportunity of seeing you.

The Boston "Globe", in its issue of January 5, 1934, published from Albania the news that the Grand Cross of the Order of Shanderbag has been bestowed upon you. However,

up to now, I have received no official notice of the event. You know how slow the Albanian bureaucracy can be; I expect to receive the papers in a couple of weeks or so. I will let you know immediately, and we shall arrange for a meeting to be held here at your earliest convenience.

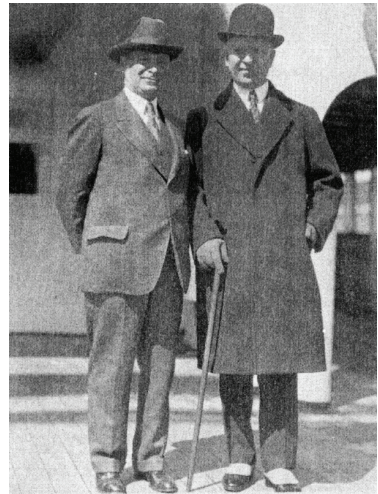
Wishing you and Mrs. Bernstein a happy New Year, I remain yours very sincerely,

Faik Konica

Minister
The Honorable Herman Bernstein

Albanian Minister to Washington Faik Konica writes to Mr Herman Bernstein about the decoration awarded by His Majesty, King Zog of Albania.⁵⁷

Bernstein and Faik Konica – two homologues, one in Tirana the other one in Washington, DC



CONCLUSION OF BERNSTEIN'S SERVICE AS A DIPLOMAT

The final days of Bernstein in Albania were full of activities and farewell parties. One of them took place at the Continental Hotel in Tirana on September 13, 1933. His Albanian friends made kind speeches. Bernstein surprised everyone with the following speech:

The other day I received a letter from America containing a newspaper clipping in which my resignation as American Minister to Albania was announced. Though the text of the news item was correct, the headlines stated that I had died. Mr. Perry, Director of the National Committee on Education by radio of Washington, wrote to me, as follows:

⁵⁷ Ibid., Folder 971.

“I was very sorry to see in the paper yesterday that you had died. It is bad enough that you should resign the post which you have occupied with such distinguished ability, but to have you resign and die is just too much.

“I hope that you are finding your life in the hereafter pleasant and that I may have the pleasure of meeting you again after you return to New York.”

My answer to Mr. Perry was this:

“I was indeed glad to get your note from the other world. If this is the hereafter, it has no terrors for me. I am rather enjoying it. It is cool here just now, the roses are in bloom again and the mountains are bathed in fascinating purple at sunset.

“The headlines in the Columbus, Ohio, Call Journal, of August 28, announcing my death in reporting my resignation as the American Minister to Albania, amused me. Mark Twain had been prematurely pronounced dead but once, while I had the first peculiar pleasure of reading my obituary in many newspapers about 28 years ago, after having been thrown from a horse in Catskill Mountains.”⁵⁸

BERNSTEIN DECORATED BY HIS MAJESTY, KING ZOG OF ALBANIA



For his contribution on strengthening US American Relations was decorated by His Majesty, King Zog of Albania. He was one of the few to receive the Star and Knight's cross of the Order of Skanderbeg.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid., Folder 971

⁵⁹ Ibid., Folder 752.

⁶⁰ This is Charles Telford Erickson's Skanderbeg Medallion and may be similar with the

future, which less than six years later would be invaded by Italians. This shows Bernstein's brilliance as a diplomat, whose knowledge about the country made him able to predict the future.

Little Albania has thus become a pawn in the game of the two conflicting blocs in European diplomacy, one headed by Italy and the other by France. She has profited to a certain extent by this conflict of interests and has succeeded in strengthening her national unity, first with the help of Yugoslavia and then with the help of Italy. Whatever the hidden motives of these nations may have been, Albania has skillfully and courageously guarded her independence even though she was forced to make numerous sacrifices, concessions and compromises in return for the material help she obtained since the end of the war. Whether or not the roads and bridges built with the aid of Italian money were intended for Italy's military schemes, they now serve useful economic purposes for Albania, having established normal communications between the various parts of the mountainous little country...

The article continues with Bernstein shedding light on Albania's predicament in juggling her relations between Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece.

Her affairs at a crisis, Albania watches keenly the various moves made by the blocs that are led by France and Italy. Albania is regarded as one of the most serious danger zones in Europe. A new war may start there if the political and military interests of other nations in Albania continue to conflict with one another. Because of her geographical position, this little country holds the key to the Adriatic and has been the bone of contention among various nations for centuries.

From a strategic point of view her coast line would be of inestimable value to Italy in the event of war. Italy has been pouring vast sums into Albania for some years to help organize the army, to build roads, bridges and fortifications. In the Balkans it is believed that Italy's effort to militarize Albania is part of the program of the imperialist ambition, accredited to Mussolini, to penetrate the Balkans, to reconquer the famous Roman Via - Egnatia leading through Albania and Yugoslavia to Salonica and Istanbul. Italy's every move in Albania

is watched with suspicion and apprehension by France, by the Little Entente and particularly by Yugoslavia. During the past few years the financial aid and military guidance furnished by Italy to Albania have served to intensify the feeling of nervousness in the Balkans and have caused Yugoslavia to make feverish military preparations to combat the feared Italian penetration of the Balkans.⁶²

CONCLUSION

Bernstein is an important figure for Albanian–American Relations. He advocated for the small country, learning about its history and culture, writing articles about its history, helping to open schools, and warning the world about its tragic future.

Bernstein is also an important figure of Jewish and American history. He is one of the greatest intellectuals to become US Ambassador. Other Jews were given ambassadorships based on their financial contributions, whereas Bernstein based on his intellectual values; therefore he set a new intellectual standard for US diplomacy.

Bernstein set a vital precedent for Jewish and Albanian relations: He discovered and wrote about the profound values of the Albanian nation such as *BESA* and hospitality, the complete absence of anti-Semitism amongst Albanians, and their historical religious and ethnic tolerance, which is still alive and an example for the world today.

Bernstein died in 1935, leaving behind a greater legacy for Albania related to the great sympathy of the Albanian people for the Jews and their veneration for the United States, which will continue on for decades to come. After Bernstein's death, King Zog of Albania instructed all Albanian Consular Missions in Europe to grant visas to any Jews faced with the threat of German persecution.

Hundreds of Jews made their way out of the Nazi inferno to find haven in Albania. Herman Bernstein's fingerprint is clearly visible in this remarkable human story.

There is perhaps no more appropriate summary of Bernstein's life than the statement of the Pan-Albanian American Federation "VATRA" on the

⁶² *The New York Times*, New York, 28 January 1934.

eve of his departure from Albania:

“Herman Bernstein is in himself a personality that captures the people’s hearts. There are persons who are the typical representatives of their race and their nation. We speak of the distinguished type of our time: the European lord, the English gentleman, the American sportsman. Mr. Bernstein is the universal man. He was a member of a race renowned for great mental aptness and high ideals, but

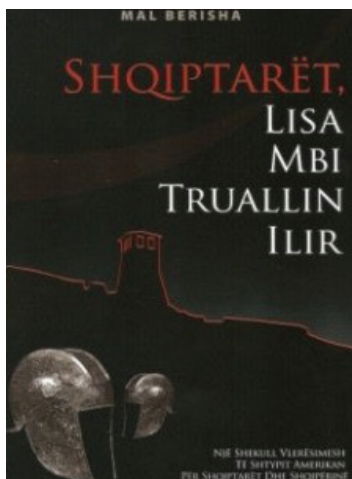
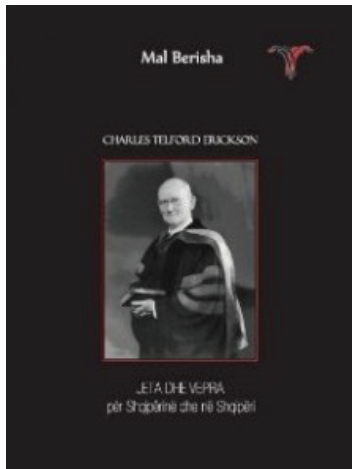


persecuted and tortured by the blind fanaticism and wild chauvinism of demented nations. Bernstein was experienced with the difficulties of this harsh life and then was brought up in the circles of his times’ most distinguished intellectuals and was nourished with the liberty-loving principles of the nation of Abraham Lincoln. He knows the world with its two sides, the dark and the bright. He is one of the pioneer citizens of the world” (*Vatra*, September 19, 1933).

END

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Studies by Mal Berisha





Mal Berisha (www.malberisha.com) is Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the United Kingdom, a career diplomat who presented his letters of credence to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, on June 27, 2013. He is also Ambassador Non-resident to Ireland as well as permanent representative to the International Maritime Organization. Ambassador Berisha previously served as a General Consul at the General Consulate of Albania in Istanbul. He joined the United Nations (UNMIK) and participated to the construction of the democratic institutions of Kosova. Later he returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the General Director of the Consular Department and then of the Department of Regional Affairs and Initiatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana. Ambassador Berisha joined the Pan Albanian Federation of America, Vatra, in 1998, contributing to the extensive efforts of Albanian Americans to resolve the Kosovo question. Ambassador Berisha is also a history scholar and has published many books and articles about Albanian history and culture. His latest publication is *Charles Telford Erickson, A Life Dedicated to Albania* (2012).
