

## Some aspects of Albania's stance towards Jews during the Second World War (1939-1944)

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### **Abstract**

The paper aims to analyze the policy of the Albanian quisling governments on 200 Albanian-Jewish residents and 1800 Jewish immigrants from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, ex-Yugoslavia during WWII.

The paper will focus first on the treatment of the Jews by the puppet government under the Italian occupation of Albania (1939-1943). The quisling Prime Minister Mustafa Kruja managed to save the Jews, despite the Nazi pressure, helped by the lack of an anti-Semitic tradition in modern Italy. The fascists were guided by the motto "to supervise the Jews, but not to punish them", being aware of the fact that an active anti-Semitism would diminish their political influence in Albania.

Secondly, the Jewish position was aggravated under the German occupation due to their insistence to provide the list of Jews in Albania and implement the Nazi doctrine of "Final Solution". But, the Albanian puppet government, under the leadership of Premier Mehdi Frasheri, refused to obey the German authorities and helped rescue the Jews by hiding them in the Albanian families, converting to Islam, providing both Albanian names and passports. This positive stance of the Albanian government and people towards Jews was mainly as a result of their hospitality, Besa (the Albanian sworn oath), religious tolerance, as well as the lack of threat to them.

Based on hermeneutics and bibliographical analysis, this papers intends to analyze the policy of the Albanian quisling governments under the pressure of the German authorities and the reasons why they rejected the Nazi request to hand over the Jews, giving an important contribution to the rescue of the Jewish people from the racial persecution.

**Key words:** *Jews in Albania, rescue, Italian and German occupation, quisling governments, WWII.*