

## THE ATTEMPTS TO BAN GAMBLING IN THE 1920S AND '30S AND THE FEAR OF THE AMERICAN PHENOMENON OF "PROHIBITIONISM"

Albania has repeatedly undertaken legal initiatives to ban gambling starting from 1914 when the Dutch military forces stationed in Albania to keep public order and reorganize the Albanian gendarmerie decided on its ban within the international agreement that brought Prince William of Wied to lead the country. During this period, gambling was banned by law in public places and punished by imprisonment.

Another initiative was taken in September 1921 at the plenary session under the discussion of the statute of the "Fatherland" federation established by Avni Rustemi and the membership of 25 companies. This organization had a provision on banning gambling. In the list of requests addressed to parliament, this federation applied for the right to organize a national lottery, provided that it was exercised under the full state control. This request sparked a series of discussions among the MPs and at the end, the MPs agreed to approve the application for lottery but to not monopolize gambling.

In 1922, the Justice Commission discussed the draft amendment to the Ottoman Criminal Code, which was still in force in Albania since the new code had not been yet approved. The proposal foresaw the amendment of Article 242 by strengthening sanctions against gambling not only for the players but also for the onlookers.

Despite previous attempts to ban gambling, it continued in the coming years and instead of banning it measure were sought to control the sale gambling cards. In 1922, a state monopoly was set cards and matches, including playing or gambling cards.

Over the years gambling and the tendency to play different games in cafes and other public spaces became a serious problem again, so parliament made a concrete proposal to ban all games, at least during the working hours. The draft law provided for two

penalties; imprisonment and fines.

Another initiative was taken in 1937, where the Interior Ministry issued the order to completely ban gambling for the population and the civil servants. Under these conditions, the Albanian Prime Minister issued a circular to all important ministries and directorates, including the Agrarian Reform Directorate, strictly ordering all employees not to gamble because, if caught, they would be investigated, tried and punished as foreseen by the law.