

Albania, Formation of "Albanian  
 Subject: Democratic Union" (Bashlidhje Demokratike Shqiptare) between  
 DKI and KLIJURA Wing of Balli  
 Kombetar.  
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(Field comment: The material which follows stems from circles directly involved in the Albanian exile political activities reported. To that extent it is somewhat slanted, but it is nevertheless to be considered the definitive report on the "Albanian Democratic Union" which has been the subject of continuing exile interest, speculation, and reporting, most of it completely erroneous.)

A. Background

1. Towards the end of 1945 the majority of Albanian political leaders who had succeeded in fleeing the Communist terror in their country gathered, almost instinctively, it seemed, in Rome. Among them were leaders of all nationalist, i.e., not Soviet Communist, parties. Most of them regarded the inhuman tyranny which had taken over in their country as the direct result of the failure of Allied military forces to land in Albania. Such a Western military occupation had been desired by all non-Communist Albanians as a counter to Yugoslav and Greek designs on Albania. In this situation Albanian political leaders in exile in Rome decided that a united political front should be set up to alleviate insofar as possible the desperate plight of their refugee countrymen, and to study the possibilities for speeding Albania's liberation.
2. The initial step in this connection was taken by the late Mehmet Bey KONITZA, a well known Albanian political figure, aided by Ferid DERVISHLI, and by Professor Ernest KOLIQI. During the first half of 1946 this trio was most active. It appealed to all parties and to their leaders to put aside factional disputes and to join all on a basis of national fraternity in a strong united front which could effectually struggle against the country's new and bloody regime. Constant and systematic sabotage from the more intransigent members of Balli Kombetar's Left Wing, however, frustrated all attempts to organize the Albanian emigration. These saboteurs seemed to have remained prisoners of the past while not having a sufficient degree of sensitivity concerning the urgent needs of the present and the future. The end of WW2, unfortunately, did not destroy only what was referred to as Albanian Fascism, but also wiped out the strength of the country's healthy core of nationalism. At this point

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Albania, one of the most strategic spots of the Mediterranean, was dominated by the country's secular enemies, the Slavs.

3. In the meantime the ranks of Balli Kombetar were being reorganized along lines of fanatic intransigence and with a view to complete monopolization of Albanian politics abroad. ZCO, who in the meanwhile had transferred to Egypt from England, sent his aide Colonel Hysen SEIMANI to Italy to reforge the weak links joining him to his old-time supporters.
4. Seeing every hope of united action and collaboration among anti-Communist exiles vanishing, certain leading personalities from north and central Albania decided to group themselves into a political formation. This took place towards the end of 1947, and the new party took the name National Independent Bloc (BKI). It immediately began publication of a newspaper which remained for a long time the sole voice of the anti-Communist emigration.
5. The first act of BKI as a party was an appeal for united collaboration by all exiles. Dr. Ismail VERJACI, BKI's president, invited all Albanian leaders to gather in Rome for a sort of Congress, offering to defray personally the enormous expense involved. Mihalj PRASHKRI indicated his approval of the initiative during a conversation with VERJACI. Others, in vaguest terms promised to give their adherence but nothing concrete was accomplished.
6. This praiseworthy undertaking of BKI led Balli Kombetar extremists to open a violent campaign of degradation against BKI leaders, accusing them of Fascist and Nazi collaborationism. In reality, Albanian Fascism was a phenomenon imposed on the country by Italian military occupation, not a spontaneous movement originating with the masses or among the intellectual class. Fascism was given to Albanians in 1939 by decree. In March 1943 Albanian Fascism was dissolved by another decree promulgated by patriotic Albanians who had no fear of MUSSOLINI's iron.
7. In the post-war period under consideration each Albanian political grouping numbered among its leadership and following former card-carrying Fascists and even former Fascist Party leaders. Balli Kombetar extremists, however, carried out their campaign so effectively that they succeeded in tagging BKI as the last remnant of Fascism. And while Balli Kombetar reorganized on the Communist-Fascist totalitarian pattern, BKI, by means of its annual assemblies and open voting procedures lived its party life in a truly democratic manner. Its leaders, all of them youthful and without political precedents could not in any case be regarded as responsible for Albanian events prior to 1944.

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8. Later it was again BKI which took the political initiative along constructive lines. Taking advantage of the presence in Egypt of several leaders of the various parties who had gathered there in connection with a welfare undertaking on behalf of the emigration, BKI again launched a project for formation of a committee uniting all political currents. Thus the Alexandria protocol of summer 1948 came into existence. The agreement, however remained a dead-letter because one of its signatories, Legality leader Abas KUPI, subsequently refused to honor his undertaking.
9. In the meantime the political conduct of Balli Kombetar extremists produced the effects desired by its promoters: relations between exile groups and among individuals were slowly poisoned, and new enmities were thus created and added to the old hates and differences brought with the refugees into their exile. In this manner all hopes for healthy and productive action were paralyzed. Worse, the sensation of diffidence thus generated infected not only the refugees, but extended to the interior of Albania where the population came to learn of the petty differences among their countrymen abroad.
10. Constitution of NCFA reawakened great hope. Although NCFA was based on individuals of minor intellectual value and political importance, it was hoped that it would effect necessary exile unity as the result of advice and pressure from its Western patrons. The hoped for union did not take place. Hates and rancors, indeed, increased under pressure from Balli Kombetar who used their new financial subsidies and moral support to further demolish hopes of anti-Communist unity. Instead of serving the cause of Western defense, the American tax-payers' dollars, in the final analysis, were more useful to the Kremlin's policy.
11. BKI was the principal victim of Balli's bitter attacks because of the political experience of its councillors and because of the prestige which it effectively enjoys in extended areas of Albania. Balli's policies, however, in the end boomeranged to its own disadvantage. The poisoned atmosphere surrounding the emigration, the corrosive polemics, and the violent disputes characterizing it, led to Balli Kombetar's schism. Its moderate wing denounced the senseless political line followed by its extremists, and, keeping for itself the original appellation of Balli Kombetar, left the party under the leadership of Muredin VLORA, Ali KLIJURA, and Koco MUKA. The extremists, under the label Agrarian Balli Kombetar, remained in NCFA.
12. BKI leaders and advisers, fully aware of the affinity between their own group and the Balli secessionists, undertook to create a platform for collaboration between the two formations. Arrival at a formal accord, however, was delayed by the frequent absences from Rome of Ali KLIJURA

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because of the latter's lack of means for his support, his difficulties in communicating with his followers scattered in the five continents, and by uncertainties arising from KLESURA's fears that BKI might unexpectedly join NCPA. In June 1952, after lengthy discussions, however, a virtual accord was reached among BKI, KLESURA's Balli, and the 2nd League of Prizrend (Xhafer DEVA). When, however, BKI requested the constitution of a directive council for this new union by the naming of two delegates from each group, both Balli and League representatives declared that they did not have the necessary personnel in Rome. Subsequently KLESURA departed for Egypt, while DEVA proceeded to Austria, and the accord was not formalized.

13. Negotiations were subsequently taken up ex novo and approached from a new point of view. Information reaching BKI in the meantime indicated the existence of a profound crisis within the 2nd League of Prizrend. Well known Kocovar leaders, one-time collaborators of DEVA, appeared to have withdrawn from the latter's line. VERLACI and KLESURA for that reason and also because of political considerations arising from Jugoslavia's position as a collaborator of the West, proposed to DEVA that his collaboration with the Union should be an indirect one. They promised to support DEVA's policies with all the means at their disposal, but suggested that Kocovar participation in the new grouping, for the above mentioned political reasons, be limited to representatives from the Kuksi and Tropoja regions, i.e. that part of Kosovo which has remained within the geographical boundaries of Albania. DEVA refused to participate on this basis, but it is hoped that his collaboration will be extended in the future.
14. Discussions with DEVA represented the ultimate but sole delaying factor. This despite the fact that intrigues and plots stemming from all the other political parties attempted to sabotage the union between BKI and the KLESURA group. Finally, on 2 July 1953, formal protocols covering the agreement between the two formations were signed.

B. Significance of A.O.U.

15. Political parties recognized by the Albanian emigration total five. Three of them, Legality, Agrarian Balli, and the Peasant Party take part in NCPA. Their artificial union, however, contains numerous germs of dissension. It can be affirmed that the three parties remain in uneasy alliance only as the result of, and in order to, continue receiving the financial subsidies passed to them. Certainly no moral or ideological ties bind them: the Said KREYZIU Peasant Party is openly Republican; Agrarian Balli is essentially anti-Zogist and therefore of Republican tendencies; the Legitimist Movement operates at a disadvantage with these allies whose professed institutional ideas are

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diametrically opposed to its own. It is well known that no effective accord exists among the three. Bitter diatribe and even physical conflict are the order of the day, as is evidenced by the frequent fights in the Ibhonbrun camp and by the recent wounding in Albania.

16. In addition to financial considerations, there is an additional bond holding this heterogeneous grouping together. The leaders of the three groups have long been joined with the British, and it is most likely that they follow British instructions.
17. The other two political groups, the moderate Balli Kombetar of Ali KILISURA and BKI, by reaching agreement for formation of the A.D.U., have united spontaneously on a basis of identical patriotic interests. Their collaboration, therefore, is expected to be harmonious and fruitful of results.
18. The two groups effectively complement each other, and make of A.D.U. a strong political combination including representatives of all Albania from the mountains of Konispol to the highland pastures of Varmochi. BKI has numerous leaders from northern and central Albania while KILISURA's group, it cannot be denied, is the strongest one in the south. A.D.U. thus is made up of outstanding personalities from all the regions of the country, and of its three religions.
19. Agrarian Balli Kombetar is predominately composed of Tosks (southern Albanians). KREZYU's party lacks consistency, having been hastily improvised by the British on the eve of NCPA's constitution in August 1949. Only Legalitet, among parties in NCPA, can be considered a valid national formation. But even here it must be borne in mind that Legalitet lacks the important element of Catholic representation, that its followers are not bound by an ideal, but by personal loyalty to the person of ZOG, and that the Party lacks intellectuals and men of political experience.
20. A.D.U. will probably be reinforced, sooner or later, by new and important elements, that is, by political and cultural leaders who have thus far remained outside of the five Albanian parties. It will also probably attract a few small but dynamic independent groups such as that which publishes the newspaper "I Merguari" (The Exile) in France, and such as the group gathered around the Istanbul newspaper "Vardar".
21. Nor can it be excluded that A.D.U., if in the future it comes to dispose of sufficient means, will attract many individuals who are currently followers of NCPA parties. There is also evidence that A.D.U. will be favorably viewed among the Old-Albania emigrant colonies in Turkey, Egypt, the United States, and the Argentine.

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C. Specific Considerations.

22. Many advantages will accrue to BKI through formation of A.D.U. Most important of these are listed in the following paragraphs of this section.
23. By uniting with Ali KLIJURA's Balli Kombetar, BKI breaks out of the isolation to which it was subjected chiefly by the fact that its membership includes many political figures accused of past Fascist collaborationism. (In reality each of the parties contains ex-leaders of the Nazi-Fascist era. But a merciless propaganda campaign, supported chiefly by BBC's Albanian broadcasts from London, succeeded in tagging BKI with the Fascist label while it managed to rehabilitate all those former collaborationists registered as Agrarian Balli or Legalist members.) There can be no doubt, in any case, that KLIJURA's Balli is the party containing the greatest number of political leaders who were in no way involved in their country's confused and tumultuous political history during the 1924-1944 period. The collaboration of those leaders with BKI leaders thus removes all substance from the posthumous accusations of Fascism.
24. The formation of A.D.U. will have beneficial repercussions within Albania where the populations have hereto felt a deep sense of diffidence and consternation as a result of their knowledge of the disparity of purpose of their leaders in exile. Factious propaganda campaigns stemming from all the MCFAs parties, but from Agrarian Balli Kombetar in particular, had exasperated the Albanians to such an extent that outbreak of civil war in a liberated Albania was to have been feared. Since 1944 Balli extremists have engaged without scruple in the most shameless campaign of denigration in order to demolish the prestige of leaders whom they feared as political competitors. This dangerous activity served only the negative purpose of reopening the old wounds of religious and regional divisions, and of reviving long dormant enmities among groups and individuals. All this in a moment when Albania's higher interests demanded a perfect fusion of programs and efforts. A.D.U. by creating bonds among the north, the center, and the south, and among recognized leaders from all three religious groups, is directed towards avoiding the plague of future internal struggles.
25. By uniting under a single banner their followers who are scattered from Jugoslavia to Australia, and from the United States to Turkey, BKI and the KLIJURA group are in a position to influence all sectors of the Albanian political emigration and to spread their ideas by a sort of capillary attraction.
26. With its dynamic nature and its efficiency, the new grouping can make a valuable contribution to a liberated Albania. A.D.U. will be in a position to create a broad and irresistible popular movement of

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national character in which Tories and Chaps will find themselves united for the first time. This union will be able to protect and to develop those patriotic traditions which will make Britain a full-fledged member of the community of nations.

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