

Revolt Appears Dim But Albania Seethes

By Eric Bourne

Special Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Pristina, Yugoslavia—Albania's 1,000,000 Communist-ruled people are greatly dissatisfied with conditions in their country. They particularly resent the control exercised by the several hundred Soviet officials sent here from Moscow. But there is already an prospect of an imminent revolt against the regime of Premier Enver Hodja.

This is the considered judgment of Apostolo Tenefi, chief of the Albanian refugee movement in Yugoslavia, and of his associates and the many recent refugees this writer has interviewed during the past days.

Following the passing of Stalin, rumors swept through Europe that Albania was alive with revolt, that the downfall of the pro-Soviet regime in Tirana was imminent, and that Mr. Tenefi was on the border with 50,000 well-armed Albanians waiting for President Tito's signal to march.

No Hint of Attack

If all this were so, one can only say that Mr. Tenefi had a remarkable amount of time on his hands for one supposedly occupied with events of great moment and that his office here—some 40 miles from the Albanian border—hardly bore the appearance of a busy staff headquarters on active adventure.

I spent some three hours with Mr. Tenefi while he and fellow refugees from Albania—some of them of this year's vintage—told their tales of present life in their homeland and of their organization and its activities in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Tenefi, born at the southern Albanian town of Korca, is heavy browed and chunkily built. He was a professor of mathematics in Tirana before he fled the country some three years ago.

His organization, the League of Albanian Political Emigrants in Yugoslavia, was founded in the spring of 1951. Since the Communists expelled the Yugoslavs in 1948, he said about 26,000 Albanians have crossed the frontier into Yugoslavia's Kosovo-Metochia region. Of these, nearly 9,000—presumably almost all the adult male refugees and some of the women—are enrolled in the organization.

According to Mr. Tenefi, the league has no permanent, direct links with contacts still inside Albania. In the main, it relies for its information on the continuous trickle of refugees through the dark forest and over the bleak mountain paths of this wild, frowning "no man's land" between Albania and Yugoslavia.

Only a handful of refugees has arrived since the change in the Kremlin leadership. Deep snows and bitterly cold March weather have for this our countryside slowed down the usual rate, and the few who did come over reported an even stricter guard on well-known frontier crossings.

On the testimony of the few, however—including one from his own home town—Mr. Tenefi's disjointed reports of large-scale, violent demonstrations in Tirana and elsewhere when news of Stalin's passing spread. He said that the Hodja government had hastily instituted closer security

precautions and that many in the towns took to the woods to escape arrest.

Agitation Squelched

In the towns, apparently, excitement reached a considerable pitch and cafés and other public places buzzed with talk of possible changes in the Tirana regime. But wherever there was any sign of public demonstrations or assembly, the police moved in, seized the suspected agitators, and chased the rest to their homes.

The latest arrivals, said Mr. Tenefi, had reported a continued atmosphere of tension and uncertainty in which General Hodja, the Premier, and Gen. Mehmet Shehu, his Minister of the Interior—neither of whom was willing to go Moscow for Stalin's funeral and leave the field to the other—were closely watching each other's every move.

A typical story was told by Tjar Atibi, a high-school teacher from Elbasan who helps run the emigrants' Albanian-language newspaper. Mr. Atibi said that it had become more and more difficult and distasteful to teach because the Albanian schools, like all Albanian culture, were completely Russified.

Aided by Peasants

Having decided near the turn of the year to make his escape, he traveled by train to Kuks in the north, near the Yugoslav border, and there encountered another teacher also bent on flight. Behind him Mr. Atibi left a father—already jailed—who has since, he believes, passed on—and a brother of whom he has had no news.

The two teachers took to the woods and there joined a group of six Albanian tribesmen, living like so many others today "on the run" from government police patrols with which they have occasional brushes, with casualties on both sides, and befriended, fed, and sheltered by friendly peasants bound by tradition to aid the fugitive.

It took the tribesmen three days to pass the two teachers through the 12-15-mile deep security zone on the Albanian side of the border. Once they ran into a small military squad. Shots were exchanged and one of the tribesmen was wounded. Finally, the two teachers reached a Yugoslav frontier post, bringing the injured man with them.

Police Agents Prowl

Said Mr. Atibi: "There is terrible discontent everywhere in Albania. But one has to say there is no sign yet of open, organized rebellion. In the towns, police agents are everywhere. Although some organized groups exist, they often are broken up by denunciation."

"In Elbasan recently, one whole class of the high school was expelled and 12 teachers and four students arrested because they were opposing the distortion of all school teaching to suit Russian requirements in history and natural science."

This is the first of two articles on Albanian refugees. The second article will be published in an early issue.

Albanian Refugees Seep Across Tito's Frontier

By Eric Bourne

Special Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Pristina, Yugoslavia

Here in Pristina, a full day's drive over doubtful roads from Belgrade and 40 miles from Albania's uneasy frontier, you find yourself in another world—or at the meeting of two worlds.

On the one hand are the mosques and minarets, the shabby but still picturesque costumes, worn with dignity by Moslem, Turk, and Albanian; pathetic donkeys laden with grain and wool, the tumble-down, red-tiled and plaster Turkish shacks and the tiny shops where leather and metal workers have piled their trade for numberless decades.

On the other are the new brick-built municipal offices, the blocks of apartments—nothing very special but an advance on most that has been built in this place before—the fine new football stadium and, on the outskirts of town, the modern cotton mill with its layout of concrete road-strips and neon lighting.

The story of this desolate, mountainous border country is a bizarre one. On both sides of the frontier there is an oyster-tight security zone. Towns like Peas, Dakovica, and Prizren, 10 miles from the frontier, are "off limits" even to Yugoslavs who may not enter them without a pass.

Albanian Refugees

Albanians come over in families, carrying their guns and driving their flocks before them. In recent months, no fewer than 15,000 sheep have been driven over the passes to graze on the lowlands between here and the border.

Sometimes the Albanian soldiers supposedly watching the crossings decide to throw in their lot with the refugees and give themselves up to the Yugoslavs. Sometimes, refugees are betrayed by "guides" and are led back into captivity. Sometimes they must lie up in the woods concealed for a week or 10 days before it is safe to make the last dash. Sometimes the effort ends in tragedy and children perish amid the hardships of the winter snows.

This writer asked Apostolo Tenefi, head of the League of Albanian Refugees in Yugoslavia, about the work of this organization. Its main job, he said, is to look after and help the refugees when they arrive in Yugoslavia and then to "prepare them for the ultimate return to their homeland."

Security Screening

The league apparently has its representatives at the main Yugoslav frontier posts where refugees are received after crossing the border. Here a first screening is carried out as a safeguard against would-be Communist agents trying to smuggle themselves into Yugoslavia. Then the refugees are passed further in for a final check before being handed over to Mr. Tenefi's organization for settlement.

Most of the Albanians arrive penniless. With Yugoslav help, the league gives them a few thousand dinars—between \$10 and \$20—and finds them work and lodging in the towns and villages of Kosmet. Many take their flocks with them and continue their old seminomadic life in the countryside. Others go to building projects.

All in all, according to Mr. Tenefi, it takes only two or three weeks until the newcomers are settled among the indigenous population.

To my question about the league's political aims, Mr. Tenefi replied, "Our only program is a

free and independent Albania. Our only aim in this organization is to prepare its members and help them prepare themselves for the liberation of their country."

He said the league had no specific political platform beyond "freedom and independence."

Liberation Goal

I asked Mr. Tenefi if the league is prepared to work with other dissident émigré groups outside Albania. He said they were prepared for a "veliki front"—a "big front"—against the present pro-Russian puppet government, but declined to specify more precisely what sort of groups would, in fact, be welcome in it.

"Our only idea," he said, "is the liberation of Albania and to prepare ourselves for that great event."

[Back in Belgrade, Vladimir Dedijer, a leading Yugoslav Government spokesman, denied suggestions that Yugoslavia has "designs upon Albania." "Yugoslavia," he told Parliament, "wants a free and independent Albania and wants the Albanian people to be masters of their own fate and to decide for themselves the sort of regime they desire."]

What then lies ahead for Albania? Might it yet "do a Tito" on the Russians? All the latest available evidence suggests rather that the Soviets still have a very firm and determined grip on their isolated but potentially useful satellite on the Adriatic.

There are more Russians than Albanians in the officers' corps and the technical branches of the Army—1,200 Bulgarians, in fact, as well as 4,000 Russians. All security is under strict Russian supervision.

Miniature Police States

There is lawlessness in the countryside—but that has been more or less customary—and, as attested by every refugee, a police state in miniature in every town with bare opportunity for sign of effectively organizing opposition to the regime.

At this stage, therefore, Albanian revolt independent of possible events or developments on the international field seems out of the question.

Certainly viewed from here in Pristina, close up to this sensitive frontier belt, the prospect seems a way off. Perhaps that is because of the more intimate spectacle of an old, ancient world being pushed into the shadows by the onrush of a new:

The spectacle of the Shiptar women and their hawk-faced men listening to musical interludes of western swing in the rest periods from their work at the chattering machines of Pristina's just-finished textile factory.

Or of the earnest, young economist in the town council office pondering the problem of extracting some of the 10 milliard tons of lignite coal recently located 25 yards beneath the famous field of Kossovo where nearly 600 years ago that fast disappearing, older world began five centuries of rule over the Serbs—five centuries of which the muezzins and their minarets now are about the only reminders.

This is the second of two articles on opposition inside Albania.

The winning team in the championship playoff of the National Basketball Association will receive \$7,500.