

TOP SECRET

Cairo, Egypt
11 January 1949

R-5-49

SUBJECT: Proposal to Overthrow Present Regime in Albania

TO: The Director of Intelligence, GSUSA
Washington 25, D.C.

Army

1. Reference is made to EEI, paragraph 5 a (4).

2. On December 23, 1948, Mr. Sotir T. Martini, Minister of the Royal Court of Albania, called on me and left the enclosed memorandum. A few days later, while in Alexandria on other business, I had occasion to meet the former King of Albania who elaborated the subject at some length. I listened to him with interest but without comment.

3. As set forth in the memorandum the ex-King feels that an exceptional opportunity now exists for the re-establishment of a government in Albania friendly to the Western Powers. The people of Albania are thoroughly disillusioned with the present regime and are ready to overthrow it at the earliest opportunity. Tito's present difficulties with the Cominform could be exploited to ensure his non-interference. A friendly Albania would go very far toward resolving the existing troublesome situation in Greece. The first crack in the ring of Soviet satellites will hearten other dominated peoples and be a definite influence against a full scale war.

4. Zog states that he is in close touch with Albania and particularly with the leaders of the mountain tribes, and that with a relatively small amount of outside aid he can rally these elements to his support and quickly supplant the present regime which is in fact upheld by a very small police element. When that has been done, he is prepared to have the ultimate form of government in Albania determined by popular expression, adding somewhat ruefully that being a King in the Balkans is not always a happy career.

5. His proposal is to organize an expeditionary force consisting of some five hundred specially selected technical men together with the requisite arms and equipment, chiefly small arms, machine guns, mortars, light tanks and transport. For the most part Albanians abroad can be recruited for this project. Anti-Soviet Poles, Germans and Hungarians might also be included.

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He feels that such an enterprise cannot be mounted from Italy as that country's political position is too delicate. Also no useful purpose can be accomplished by working with Tito. The latter's position may at any time change. He is apprehensive of Greece inasmuch as the Epirus and Southern Albania have been areas of territorial disputes between the two countries, and he fears Greek aspirations in this direction.

6. The base from which such a venture can be launched with assurance of secrecy poses a somewhat difficult problem. Zog says that it can be done in Egypt and that Farouk would be agreeable but that the country is too full of Soviet agents to hope to keep it from being known. His first choice is Transjordan, with, of course, the tacit acquiescence of the British. Abdullah is very sympathetic to him and would readily consent. Present Palestine troubles might preclude this although the situation there would provide excellent cover for such an undertaking. His other suggestion was Libya.

7. While in execution this would be a wholly Albanian affair, it would require outside financial and material assistance. This might be provided through the intermediary agency of Albanians abroad and particularly in the U.S. Zog's idea is that once the expedition is launched it would be based entirely in Albania, and that once established in Albania, he would be able to mobilize sufficient forces to hold the mountains against eventual Yugoslav attack if the Tito regime is deposed or if Tito composes his differences with the Soviets. Albanian officers of experience are available for planning, organization, training and execution. No detailed planning has been done and the extent of the aid required has not yet been determined.

8. I am unable to judge how accurately Zog evaluates the internal situation in Albania but I spent some time in that country during the Italo-Greek war and I am much inclined to agree that the social structure of the country and the character of the Albanian peasants and tribesmen present a barren field for communism. The proposed scale of operation seems on the face of it quite optimistic but may well be justified by the state of affairs within the country particularly if, as proposed, the venture be preceded by organized preparation of internal coordination.

9. I understand that about a year ago, before Tito's break with the Cominform, Zog approached the State Department and also the Foreign Office. The latter expressed sympathy but did not consider the moment then opportune. This memorandum is therefore transmitted for your

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consideration. Zog assures me that he has not attempted any other approach and that he will refrain from doing so until I am advised what reply, if any, I should make.

1 Encl
Ltr to MACairo fr
Mr. Sotir Martini
dtd 23 Dec 48

NORMAN E. FISKE
Colonel, GSC
Military Attache

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