

12 July 1949

MEMORANDUM:

TO: ADPC

THRU: ADBO

FROM: Chief, PBP

SUBJECT: Albanian Internal Situation

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2D
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

The following information, dated February-April 1949, was received from an untested source who is believed to be reliable:

1. There allegedly exist within the Albanian Communist Party disagreements of such proportions as to endanger any future action which it might undertake among the Albanian people. For instance, in the text of deliberations at the Communist Party Congress held last autumn, General Enver Hoxha and the followers who remained faithful to him attempted to place all responsibility for the crimes of the Albanian Communist Party on the shoulders of Koci Xoxe and Pandit Kristo, accusing them of being agents of Tito, or 'Trotzkyites,' guilty of sabotage and treachery. Still another group of parliamentary deputies and other well-known persons have been accused of treason for having attempted to detach Albania from the USSR and to reach an accord with the Western powers.
2. All of the trials currently taking place are directed against Communists. The first person to disappear from the political scene was Dr. Sejfullah Kaleshova; then came the turn of Nako Spiro, who was killed during a cabinet meeting, in the presence of the other ministers. Following that, Koci Xoxe and his followers were arrested, and finally, the execution before firing squads of a number of deputies took place. All of these incidents show how the Albanian Communist leaders are killing each other off at an ever-accelerating pace.
3. Within the Government, Dr. Omer Nishani retains his post as President, but is regarded by all as being rather ineffectual. Haxhi Lleshi, Myslim Pasa, Spiro Majsia, Dali Hircu, and Bedri Spahiu no longer have an important voice in the Government, and have in effect been shelved. Members of the original revolutionary clique who remained loyal to Hoxha are Mehmet Shehu, Tuk Jakova, and Spiro Koleka. Hoxha has created a new hierarchy, selected from within the Party organizations. The conflict between Hoxha and the former was a lengthy one, ending in victory for the former; he enjoyed the support of Moscow, while Xoxe was supported by Belgrade.

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4. The same functionaries, who are members of the new hierarchy, are sabotaging the country. The tragic economic condition has affected not only the masses of the people but also the governmental and military classes, who have resorted to corruption to supplement their salaries. In view of the heavy penalties which are in force against corruption, this fact is very significant. Among the ranks of the Communist Party, the spirit of sacrifice and the perfect discipline which existed during the movement's early days are now scarcely a memory. Few members attend the political meetings, and their loyalty to the Party has been greatly weakened. They remain members not from conviction, but rather in order to take advantage of the extra privileges of Party membership, among which are special rations obtainable at the cooperatives and state-owned stores. Probably only ten to fifteen per cent of the Party members remain ardent supporters of the regime. The rest no longer believes in its stability and permanence, and awaits daily new political developments. In effect, the whole population heartily detests the Hoxha regime and believes that, since they have no real popular support, their power will soon begin to crumble.

Communist Party Organization

5. The various organizations which are subordinate to the Albanian Communist Party, such as the Youth Organization, Women's Group, Teachers' Organization, etc., form the so-called National Front of Anti-Fascist Liberators. These organizations at present exist only nominally, since all activity has ceased, paralyzed by lack of interest on the part of the members.

6. The failure of the CP, according to sources, is due to such factors as the ever-expanding misery of the population and the abuses of the officials, as well as the growing disillusionment of the young partisans.

7. The population is literally starving. The country's prisons are filled. Concentration camps are filled with intellectuals and eminent men. Forced labor is also taking its toll of victims from the youth of Albania, who are undernourished and without clothes to protect them from the weather.

8. The population has reached the point of outrage where it no longer fears death; it protests openly, and actually menaces the tyrants. Indignant interruptions in the course of political meetings, such as took place at Prenda and Blesha, are the order of the day. The situation is comparable to that which existed in Italy in 1943 at the time of the collapse of Fascism.

✓ "9. At Cerik, there is a camp for the parliament and so-called 're-education' of officers and enlisted men suspected of disloyalty to the regime. It is enclosed in barbed wire, with machine-guns mounted around it. The prisoners number about 800.

Possibility of Revolt

"10. In speaking of the Albanian 'people,' one should think only of this mass of old men, women or children; only these remain at home, while all the young, physically sound men have been put into the Army or impressed into the so-called 'voluntary' labor organizations, which are actually battalions of slaves forced to perform the hardest of labor and endure the most inhuman fatigue. It is in these organizations that discontent is at its greatest, and it is here that propaganda would do the most good. By the proper use of propaganda, in fact, it should be possible to develop a clandestine revolutionary network. With prudence, careful preparation, and the use of determined persons ready for action, it should be possible to bring about a change of regime without the use of large forces.

"11. If at this time the discontent against the present Government is not much in evidence, it is not because of the strength of government control, but simply because the population has not seen any sign of help from abroad. Everyone is convinced that without help from the West, any attempt at revolt would end in fatal failure, in view of the inevitable Soviet support of Hoxha's regime. However, once the people learned of the existence of a revolutionary organization which enjoyed foreign support, it would be ready to rise.

Resistance

✓ "12. From the time of the Communists' advent to power in Albania to the present, the number of armed nationalist units carrying out resistance in the mountains has steadily decreased. The reasons for this diminution of active resistance are, firstly, the high number of dead and wounded following the various encounters with Government troops; secondly, the discouragement engendered by reprisals against populations which supported the resistance; and finally, the steadily increasing numbers of resisters who have taken refuge outside Albania, especially in Yugoslavia.

"13. In 1947 the members of the nationalist resistance groups had already decreased to about 50 per cent of those who had been in action in 1945, and today it can be said that the number is down to 20 per cent of those active in 1945.

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"14. The units still in existence are small groups of three or four men, who generally either meet by quiet armed encounters for fear of reprisals against the civilian population, or are forced into inactivity by the lack of supplies and munitions. All such groups are nationalistic. At the present time, it does not appear that any of Enver Hoxha's supporters took refuge in the mountains. The most organized members of the pro-Tito and 'Tretajkë' group are either in prison or have fled to Yugoslavia as refugees. There may still be some in the ranks of the army, just because they have not yet been discovered. This is also true within the police force and among civil servants, and these persons carry out sabotage against the pro-Communist regime.

"15. It should be repeated that, if a clandestine organization should prove to have the support of one of the great Western Democracies, and if such an organization should take the initiative in a revolt against the present regime, the mountains would once again be filled with anti-Communist partisan bands, with battalions and even brigades of anti-Stalinist and anti-Cominformist rebels. Enver Hoxha is aware of these facts, and it is for this reason that he went to Moscow last March to obtain further military and economic aid for his Government.

"16. In spite of the fact that widespread terror has reached unheard-of proportions, hatred of the regime and the desire for liberation are great enough to overcome all fear. Not only the youth, the Army, the police and the gendarmerie, but a number of officials of the Communist Party as well, feel the need for a change of government.

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"17. The active leaders of resistance include the following: Ismajl Haza, with two followers at Zaranik; Deme Dofani, with three followers at Umre and Sapat; Qeria Mushi at Polia; Qeria Zogolli at Berzichte; Ram Dervish at Markanesh; Islam Debra at Letem; Inafer Hama, with two followers at Shungjergj; Ferrit Halletja, with two followers, at Hallet; and Sul Selajra, with his anti-Communist band. At Mueschjeja (possibly Muegajas) there exists a clandestine anti-Communist organization which, for the moment, is confining itself to registering the names of trustworthy persons who have arms and want to overthrow the regime; registrations are held in the utmost secrecy.

Foreign-Supported Resistance Movements

"18. A great many people escape into Yugoslavia from north Albania, and the families left behind by these escapees arrive daily at the Berat concentration camp.

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"19. It is rumored that Tito is organizing all the Albanians who have fled into the Yugoslav Kosovo region into military units along with native Kosovars, with the intention of using these units in an attack on Albania, in order to overthrow the Hoxha regime. It is not known who would replace Hoxha, but it is known that the head of the movement in Kosovo is Gani Kryeziu, aided by Sam Hoxha and Bajram Bajraktari (the latter is the brother of Enver Hoxha, who is currently a refugee in Greece).

"20. In addition, an operation is at present being organized in Greece to make use of well-armed, well-equipped anti-Communist Albanians. These will enter Albania, create disorder, and produce uprisings to justify military intervention by the Greeks, who will abolish the present regime and, with it, the main point d'appui of Zachariades and his Greek Communist partisans.

Military Situation

"21. The Armed Forces

It is difficult to state precisely the total number of men available to the Communist regime, because this number is not a stable one but varies as the situation demands. Nevertheless, some rough calculations are possible. The Albanian state is today organized into ten prefectures, 50 sub-prefectures, and 200 so-called localities. In each prefectural seat there is a battalion of 800-1,000 men, 120-150 gendarmes, and 80-100 police. In each sub-prefectural seat there are 170-200 soldiers, 20-30 gendarmes, and 40-50 police. In each locality the Government maintains from 8 to 10 armed men. To these must be added two divisions distributed along the Albanian-Greek border and one division along the Yugoslav frontier, as well as the frontier police, naval personnel, foresters, customs police, and the DMP (People's Security Division). Such a calculation yields a total of 70,000-85,000 armed men.

"22. Armament

The Army has Russian small arms and artillery. The police and DMP are armed with equipment of varying origin. Automatic weapons are principally of German, Russian, English, or Italian makes. The Army has an adequate amount of heavy weapons (heavy machine-guns, mortars, and artillery).

"23. Other Equipment

Clothing of the armed forces is in poor condition, especially in the case of shoes. The Army has clothing of uniform color, but it is of poor quality; the police wear dark grey uniforms. Members of the DMP have the most varied clothing, of all nationalities and colors. The armed guards maintained in the localities wear the national costume, with only a military cap to indicate their official capacity.

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***24. Food**

The food provided for the Army is insufficient to nourish men subjected to the rigors of hard work and military training. Nevertheless, it is far superior in both quality and quantity to that available to the civilian population. Armed forces personnel are assured of a daily ration of bread as well as frequent portions of meat, whereas the civilians are dying of abject starvation, and have forgotten the taste of meat, butter, milk, etc.

***25. Morale**

Morale of the troops leaves much to be desired. The propaganda of the frequent political meetings has long since lost any effect other than that of arousing revulsion. The spy system which exists within the Army has prevented open manifestations of resentment; the troops do as they are told out of fear of the consequences of refusal. But nearly all of the men hate the present regime violently, since, with few exceptions, all have relatives who have been executed, imprisoned, or placed in one of the concentration camps. At the first opportunity offered them, the soldiers would fire their first shots at the political commissars, who exercise harsh supervision over their units. The Communist officers are also hated. Proof of the low level of morale is seen in the ever-increasing number of desertions to Greece and Yugoslavia of men who have been mistreated by the political commissars.

***26. Russian Military Direction**

Every military activity of importance in Albania is under the supervision of Soviet military personnel of all grades. From the General Staff level down to the most peripheral unit headquarters, there are Soviet technicians in charge.

***27. Fortifications and Depots**

In addition to the fortifications and depots which already exist, new ones are under construction. On the hills of Salk, south of Tirana, there is a military zone surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by sentinals and dogs.

***28. Vehicles and Arms**

The military depots are full of all types of transport and armored vehicles; these include Italian and German automobiles, American and English UNRRA trucks, armored cars, and tanks. However, most are unserviceable because of lack of spare parts, tires, and gas.

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Economic and Financial Situation

"29. Agriculture

It must be admitted that with the opening of irrigation canals and the introduction of tractors on the farms, agriculture has, in appearance at least, made considerable progress. On the debit side, however, the ill-conceived agrarian reform, with its imposition of the khulbos (collective farm) system, has lowered the morale of the peasants, who have no particular incentive to work since they know that their product will for the most part be confiscated for the Government.

"30. Prior to the collectivization program the hai or aga took a third of his peasants' produce; the Government now takes everything. In fact, the peasants today are sometimes forced to buy grain on the black market in order to meet the quotas set for them by the khulbos. If they act otherwise, they suffer stiff penalties for failure to meet their quotas.

"31. The recruitment of men for the armed forces has taken away much-needed labor from the farms. Still other labor has been eliminated by Government reprisals against the peasants' passive resistance.

"32. Agricultural Bank

The agricultural bank set up by the regime has not been of any use, since its credits have been granted to Government favorites and have not been used for the purposes for which they were given.

"33. Soviet Organizers

In all the ministries, as well as in every workers' union and organization, there are Soviet advisers, organizers, or technicians. These are most numerous in the fields of agriculture and public works.

"34. Industry

All factories and work-shops are now the property of the State. The Government is trying in every way to raise the level of production of the most necessary industrial products, but so far its efforts have not been successful because of the lack of raw materials and the prohibition against commercial relations with the West. Sabotage is also widespread, both in factories and in work-shops.

"35. Commerce

Commerce is practically non-existent. All stores have been closed, and only state cooperatives are allowed to function. The latter are of two categories: the first category includes

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stores selling rationed goods or agricultural instruments provided by UNRRA; use of stores of this category is limited to members of the Communist Party. In stores of the second category, the state sells goods at black market prices, prices which are 15 to 20 times higher than those of rationed goods. This situation has undermined the morale of the population, which is beset with Government spies who exercise their profession in order to obtain a ration card.

*36. Money

Prices are unreasonably high, and the lek is almost valueless. A gold Dukat is worth 1,000 to 1,200 leks on the black market, whereas the legal rate is 350 leks. Both laborers and Government employees are caught between high prices and low pay.

*37. Local Products

The statistics published by the newspapers and magazines are all falsified and are merely part of the Government's propaganda. Whereas formerly the products of the soil were sent to Yugoslavia, they now go to the Soviet Union and its satellites. Very little arrives in return from these countries. The lack of food has increased the incidence of tuberculosis, which is claiming innumerable victims. In order to keep themselves alive, people have to sell their last bits of personal property. Often such property can be sold to the Soviets stationed in Tirana. One rarely sees a person with good shoes in the city. In the country even the native shoes, opinge, made of sheepskin, are lacking. The slaughter of domestic animals, to obtain the skins, is prohibited. Salt is often lacking, and it is difficult to obtain kerosene.

*38. Pastures and Forests

Pastures and forests are all state-owned. The haphazard and wholesale cutting of forest wood is causing enormous damage in the mountain valleys, and is resulting in floods as well. The forests of the Mirdita, Mamurras, Ies, Krraba, Dajti, and Pasa are on the way to extinction; they are being chopped down to provide fire-wood for the Army and to be made into charcoal.

*39. Livestock

Livestock is diminishing because the Government takes live animals for taxes and fines. Meat is also exported to the USSR. In addition, the mortality rate is high among the animals, since under the collective system they no longer receive the individual care which they did when privately owned.

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Communications and PTT

"40. Roads

The Government is neglecting the maintenance of the country's roads, both paved and unpaved. A new road, however, (of military importance and decided by Marshal Tito) has been opened between Peshkopijs and Shkoder. It was built by squads of political prisoners and young men from the forced-labor battalions.

"41. The two paved roads, Durres-Pecin and Durres-Tirana, which have already been inaugurated with great fanfare, have not in fact been completed at all. Three roads, Tirana-Yaberish, Berat-Durres, and Gussar-Rus, have been completed. The highway from Gussar to Korca is almost finished, having been built by a battalion of 400 laborers. Work was started in January and is to be finished in June, because Enver Hoxha personally ordered that it be completed in six months.

"42. The Zog Bridge-Kirdite road is used by only three or four motor vehicles daily, all of them military trucks which carry fuel wood to the troops in Shkoder and Tirana. Across the Tirana plain, there is a new paved road, five meters wide, branching off from the Tirana-Durres road and ending in the village of Hysbelish, where there is a kolleha. This road is probably used for tractors.

"43. Motor Transport

Motor transport is practically non-existent for civilians. The SATI bus runs twice a week from Tirana to Shkoder. One has to fight to buy a ticket, however, and many of those bought are then resold at double the original price by speculators. In order to travel, it is also necessary to have an identity card, and this too is expensive. So the mass of the people, for lack of money or documents, because seats are few, and because service is often suspended for lack of tires or gas, has to do its travelling by foot or animal-drawn cart.

"44. PTT

The PTT facilities which existed before the advent of the present Government continue to function, but they have not been improved or extended.

Justice

"45. Prisons are overflowing and concentration camps have had to be enlarged. The power of life and death in effect rests in the hands of five persons: Enver Hoxha; the USSR Minister, Dmitri Stepanovich Chevachkin; the Minister of Justice, Dr. Manol Kononi; Tuk Jakova; and Mehmet Shehu.

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Education

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46. The number of schools has been increasing, and governmentized fight against illiteracy is being kept up with good results. The purpose of the Government in teaching people to read, however, is not to enlighten them but to send them to praise Communist propaganda. Many of the speeches prepared by the Government's teachers give only a superficial knowledge, and are in reality only intended to pay out propaganda concerning the area in which they are given. In such sessions, the students are questioned every morning on what they have heard at home and concerning the conduct of their parents. The secondary school teachers have conducted meetings, the Government's efforts to turn education into a tool of the Government, and even among the teachers who once favored Communism there are many who now repent their former views. The students plainly indicate their distaste for the periods of ideological indoctrination. The Russian language has been introduced in all grades, while the classes of the Albanian language have been prohibited. The evaluation of Stalin and his work constitutes a compulsory part of the course of education.

Press and Propaganda

47. To give an impression of freedom of the press, a great number of newspapers and magazines is published in Albania. Each part of the complex Communist organization has its own publication, but in reality everything is repetitious. All privately-owned radios have been confiscated.

'Popular Culture'

48. Cinema

Russian films are the only ones shown. These show life in Russia, Soviet battles and victories, the great results obtained in Soviet Russia by Communism, etc.

49. Theatre

There are a number of Albanian actors, some of whom are talented. They perform propaganda plays, many of which are translated from Russian. Directors, producers, and technicians are generally Soviet Russians.

50. Sport

Sport has remained about the same as under previous regimes, with the difference that the organizers and coaches are now Soviet Russians.

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"51. Libraries

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All anti-Communist publications have been destroyed. The shelves are full of books by Russian authors, especially those concerned with the Communist era. Libraries are little patronized except by the few remaining Communists who remain, or by teachers, who have to expound the Communist line in their lectures.

Miscellaneous Notes

✓ "52. At Kruja there is a camp for Greek civilian 'refugees'—men, women, and children who were kidnapped by the Greek Communist partisans and carried off to Albania. At Peqin there is a camp for Greek governmental troops taken prisoner by the Communist partisans.

✓ "53. In Kibasan there is a battalion of 1,200 soldiers, a battery of artillery, a section of engineers, 80-100 gendarmes, 60-70 policemen, 12 finance guards, and 15 municipal (the latter unarmed). Eighteen persons are occupied as forest guards, and five armed men guard the olive groves. In Librasht, there are 250 soldiers, an artillery section with two cannon, 30 gendarmes, and 45-50 policemen. At Durrës, there is an unattached battalion of Government police, under the command of Rhaman Uruci, sent there by the Prefect of Kibasan, Petrit Hakoni. It is said that their mission is to search out and surround Hamid Matjani and his comrades in the Lixhe region.

"54. The administrative system in Albania is set up as follows:

- a. Under the national Government are the prefects, who head the prefectural councils, and earn 8,000 leks per month.
- b. Next are the sub-prefects, with their councils, who earn 6,000 leks per month.
- c. Functioning under the sub-prefects are the Anti-Fascist Councils of the localities, headed by a president and a secretary, who receive respectively 2,000 and 1,500 leks per month. Three other members of each Council serve without pay.
- d. The lowest level, the village, is headed by the Anti-Fascist Council of the village, operating in conjunction with councils for women and young people respectively.

✓ "55. Work is proceeding on a telfer span which will run from the village of Hani Hodoishti to the forest of Haishtes, on Mount Dardha, and will be used for exploitation of the forests.

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"56. Near the Yugoslav border, ~~some~~ villages have been evacuated by their populations, who have fled to Yugoslavia. They have taken with them their households and flocks. It has also been reported that the entire population of a Mirdite village fled to Yugoslavia, but this does not seem likely in view of the distance from Mirdite to the border.

"57. In the cooperative stores, money payments are not accepted, and a barter system is in force. For example, for 30 eggs one can obtain a ration ticket for a quantity of salt worth only about ten eggs. Thus only by delivering goods to the cooperatives can other goods be withdrawn.

"58. A little sugar, matches, newspaper, and a ludicrously small quantity of cloth have recently arrived from Bulgaria and Russia. USSR merchandise is still being sold at very high prices in the state stores. In village schools, the students use wrapping paper, since no other type of paper is available."

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