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23 August 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation With King Zog of Albania.

PERSONS PRESENT: King Zog

1. I called on King Zog at the Mayflower Hotel on 15 August 1951, in accordance with an appointment previously made by the office, and explained that I had been directed by [redacted] to present his compliments and to talk about any matters that the King may wish to take up. [redacted] was introduced as a colleague interested in Albanian matters. The King was very cordial and friendly and appeared to speak with complete candor. The substance of the statements made by him follows.

a. The King expressed uneasiness concerning Yugoslavia's political position because Yugoslavia has, in his opinion, taken no decisive steps which commit it to a partnership with the West. Specifically, he mentioned as supporting evidence the fact that Yugoslavia has sought no mutual defense agreements with Greece and Turkey, her logical friends in the event she is truly opposed to the Soviet block; she is still unfriendly in her attitude toward Greece in spite of the resumption of diplomatic relations; she has not sought a mutual defense arrangement with the United States; and certain pro-Tito individuals are still to be found in important positions in the present Albanian Government. Furthermore, the King felt that Tito's position could be rather weak within his own country since there were quite a number of pro-Cominform Yugoslavs in the Yugoslav Government and since the bulk of the people are anti-Communist in general. He indicated that naturally Yugoslavia's military power is a desirable asset to the West even if the quality of its armed forces may not be as good as formerly. He then talked about the desirability of doing something to force Yugoslavia to take a definite stand on one side or the other, and said that he believed early action in Albania would serve such a purpose because the overthrow of the Hoxha regime would

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break Soviet encirclement as presently represented by Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary. An added advantage of destroying the Communist regime in Albania would be the encouragement which it would give to the satellite countries to revolt against Soviet domination.

b. With regard to Albania, the King said that there were four specific points which he wished me to bring to General Smith's attention and which are of particular importance from the American and Western viewpoint and indicate the necessity for early action in Albania. These are:

(1) A Soviet-controlled Albania constitutes a potential threat of 100,000 armed men behind Yugoslavia's back.

(2) The Soviets are enlarging and improving seven existing airfields in Albania and building two additional new fields. These fields are obviously not intended for activities directed against Yugoslavia since the Soviets have adequate facilities for air operations against Yugoslavia from Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary. The logical assumption is that the development of these air facilities in Albania is directed toward the Mediterranean and the U. S. bases being established in North Africa.

(3) The Bay of Valona provides facilities for basing a naval force that could be used effectively against shipping in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic.

(4) The Island of Saseno has facilities for a submarine base from which the Soviets could paralyze shipping in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic.

c. As a first step in initiating any plan of action against Albania, the King considers two diplomatic moves necessary on the part of the United States. These are:

(1) The U. S. should make a declaration to the effect that it stands firmly for the preservation of the territorial integrity of Albania.

(2) The U. S. should induce Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy to declare that they undertake not to seek any Albanian territory by force of arms, and that in

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the event they have any territorial claims against Albania, they will seek adjustment of these claims through the machinery and methods established for the solution of such problems by the United Nations Organization.

d. As regards the actual operations in Albania, the King stated that three possible courses of action exist:

(1) An invasion of Albania by the U. S. armed forces. This he considers an unrealistic and impractical thought which we can dismiss.

(2) An invasion of Albania by an Albanian force to be assembled and led by the King. He could bring together 8,000 to 10,000 men, recruited from among the various Albanian groups scattered throughout the world. This possibility is not particularly desirable because it could be readily interpreted by the Soviets as an act of aggression on the part of the countries within which the invasion elements are assembled, equipped and trained.

(3) The present Communist regime in Albania could be overthrown by an insurrection developed within the country under the King's leadership. In this instance the action would have all the earmarks of a spontaneous Albanian activity which could less readily be described by the Soviets or other interested countries, an act of foreign intervention or aggression and is therefore the most desirable and practical method of solving the Albanian problem.

e. In discussing the current situation in Albania, the King attributed great importance to the Soviet interest in the air fields but explained that in general his information is very meagre because of the difficulties encountered by him in sending in his agents. He stated that there were a number of Soviet troops in the country and on further questioning, he expressed the view that they consisted of miscellaneous specialists rather than tactical troops. He estimated the present Albanian armed forces to number something of the order of 50,000 men and said that in addition there were a small Croat brigade and a small Montenegrin brigade composed of anti-Tito Communists, as well as a brigade of Greek Communists. He believes the Yugoslav units not to exceed battalion size even though they are termed brigades. The Albanian armed forces

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contain, according to him, a considerable proportion of officers who are still loyal to him and who would defect in the event of an uprising and turn against the regime. Furthermore, he indicated that scattered throughout the country there are some 2,000 former reserve officers with war experience who are loyal and would provide local leadership in conducting operations against the Government. He also stated that there are a number of non-military people in the Hoxha administration who are basically loyal to him and would turn against the regime when called upon to do so.

f. In regard to the Albanian committee sponsored by the Yugoslav Government, the King said that the control of the group naturally rests in the hands of confirmed Communists but that the bulk of the people in whose name the committee speaks are certainly anti-Communist and include a large number of his supporters. He expressed surprise at the fact that people in the committee are allowed to correspond with him through the open mails and that as far as he can determine from letters received, the Yugoslavs are not exerting any political pressure on individual members at this time. He specifically mentioned a letter received from Nik Vukashin who is one of his followers and who is allegedly one of the leaders of the Koca Xoxe brigade, which is somewhere in the Vardar Valley area engaged in public works projects and organized presumably as a potential fighting unit. He indicated that the Yugoslav Committee presents a serious problem and reiterated his support of the National Albanian Committee in New York and Rome, and stated that he was doing what he could to maintain harmonious conditions in the Committee.

g. The conversation developed along rather general lines relating to China and the Near East. The King stated that he had talked with a number of friends among senators and representatives and had tried to convey to them the importance of and necessity for prompt action in certain areas. He said that the Soviet world now numbers approximately 200,000 Soviets, 100,000 satellites and a tremendous number of Chinese. If the Chinese remain under Soviet control, they will represent an inexhaustible supply of manpower which can be used against the United States and the West in general. It is therefore essential to do something in China and the first step should be aid to Chiang with a view to promoting wide-spread resistance in China itself. In his opinion, prompt action in the Far East is essential.

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h. In regard to the Middle East, prompt action is also necessary. Here one of the first problems requiring attention, according to the King, is the resolution of the Israeli-Arab question. In his opinion, the United States should be able to force a prompt settlement of this matter. Then, thought should be given to the use of the Abyssinians, Sudanese and Kurds as armed forces to fight any Soviet move toward the Middle East and the Suez Canal. He considers that a force of a million or a million and a half men can be created among these people and can go a long way to defeating any Soviet thrust. In particular, he mentioned the necessity for doing something with the Kurds in the region of the Gulf of Iskenderon before the Communists are able to penetrate that area.

i. In conclusion, the King asked me to assure [ ] that his interest in action in Albania is not based on a desire to restore the throne, but is purely an expression of his interest as a patriotic Albanian and his conviction that he has a loyal following and can make a real contribution. He undertakes to invite a U.N.-sponsored group to supervise the establishment of any post-insurrection system of government that the people of Albania may select. He further stated that he stood ready to do anything we may wish to ask him to do in the future and is at our disposal.

j. As the reason for his visit to this country, the King stated that his main object is to find a suitable school for his son, who is now 12½ years of age and whom he wishes to bring up in the United States.

[ ]  
Chief, EE-1

cc: [ ]

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